

The Sociology of Gender

A Brief Introduction

Laura Kramer



Laura Kramer's "essentials" text provides an overview of basic sociological concepts and perspectives on gender—presented in a concise, accessibly written form.

The Sociology of Gender's explicitly sociological approach provides an alternative to, and critiques of, biological and psychological approaches to gender and sexual orientation. The popularity of these approaches is itself analyzed to encourage students' critical thinking.

Chapters focus on the family, work and the economy, and the legal and political systems. Shorter sections discuss gender in language, the media, religion, knowledge systems, and education. Throughout, the text integrates variations in the meanings of gender related to race/ethnicity and social class. Current research informs all discussions, and historical background helps students understand the dynamic nature of gender systems and the importance of social action.

The style of this text is highly readable, and the content is rich and varied. The book does not presume prior sociology coursework or a high level of statistical sophistication. Students will relate to the numerous real-world examples, brief definitions, and the avoidance of unnecessarily specialized language.

A glossary, indices and discussion questions at the end of each chapter add to the volume's accessibility—inviting the reader to move from passive reading to active application.

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The Sociology of Gender

A Brief Introduction

Laura Kramer
Montclair State University



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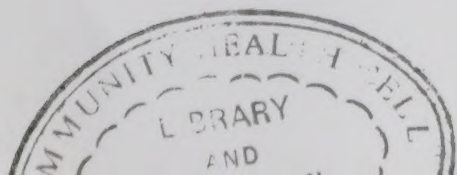
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Contents

<i>Foreword by Ruth Hesse</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<i>Chapter 1</i> <i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Chapter 2</i> <i>Culture and Ideology</i>	23
<i>Chapter 3</i> <i>Socialization and Social Interaction</i>	57
<i>Chapter 4</i> <i>The Family and Intimate Relationships</i>	87
<i>Chapter 5</i> <i>The Economy and Work</i>	113
<i>Chapter 6</i> <i>The Political and Legal System</i>	147
<i>Chapter 7</i> <i>The Changing Gender System</i>	177
<i>Glossary</i>	183
<i>References</i>	191
<i>Author Index</i>	209
<i>Subject Index</i>	213

*Dedicated to
Aaron and Katherine Kramer
and
Anna and Jack Kolodny*

Contents

by Beth Hess

<i>Foreword</i> by Beth Hess	vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
Chapter 2	
Culture and Ideology	25
Chapter 3	
Socialization and Social Interaction	57
Chapter 4	
The Family and Intimate Relationships	87
Chapter 5	
The Economy and Work	115
Chapter 6	
The Political and Legal System	147
Chapter 7	
The Changing Gender System	177
<i>Glossary</i>	185
<i>References</i>	191
<i>Author Index</i>	209
<i>Subject Index</i>	215

Foreword

By Beth Hess

Back in the late 1960s, when the New Feminist Movement emerged from the activism of that remarkable decade, sociologists had difficulty finding an appropriate frame of reference for studying the questions raised by these new voices. My first attempt was to teach a course called "Sociology of Sex Roles," that may have been cutting edge in 1972, but soon proved grossly inadequate. Role learning came nowhere close to explaining the broad range of issues of interest to my students. As should have been obvious to sociologists from the beginning, the problem was not in our heads—or bodies—but in the social system. In addition, the links between biological sex and behaviors were much more tenuous and varied than originally assumed. Thus, both "roles" and "sex" proved to be far too limiting, touching on only part of what we were exploring.

The original reading list was relatively sparse. There were many manifestos and anecdotal accounts that were fun to read but that lacked a certain *gravitas*. Gradually, articles appeared in the professional journals, documenting the depth and extent of sexism and discrimination in one academic field after another. In sociology, feminist scholars began to build a theoretical basis for understanding social patterns at all levels from daily interactions to the structure of the political system. The concept of "gender" emerged as a central unifying theme, linking theory and research. But I still did not have a textbook for what was now called the "Sociology of Men and Women."

Into this void, in 1979, came *The Sociology of Gender*, written by two colleagues from New Jersey whom I had met on various marches and demonstrations—Laurie Davidson and Laura Kramer (Gordon). At last, a textbook that covered all the major topics, was up-to-date,

and clearly written! The book also provided a title for the course that remained unchanged for the next two decades.

Over these twenty-some years, as the sociology of gender has expanded in range and sophistication, Laura Kramer has continued to track new developments and to make them accessible to instructors and students. Skillfully integrating current statistics with examples from popular culture and everyday life, she brings three generations of feminist activism to life. In addition, the volume includes a glossary of key terms and a wealth of suggestions for the practical application of the theories and data covered in these seven compact, readable chapters. You will be introduced to the major ideas and research findings that have made gender the hottest topic in sociology. The American Sociological Association's Section on Sex and Gender is the largest of all its subdivisions. The number and variety of scholars, men and women alike, doing work in this area grows each year. And each year, our understanding of crucial significance of gender deepens. As you will soon discover for yourself, there is no aspect of social life untouched by how we think, feel, and act as gendered persons, and there is no part of the social system that is not arranged along gender lines. This is what places the study of gender at the forefront of a number of academic fields—philosophy, literature, psychology, political science, economics, family studies, religion, education, health and health care—each of which has been transformed by the new gender scholarship, but perhaps none as thoroughly as sociology. In turn, students find themselves empowered by their fuller appreciation of the many ways in which gender shapes their personal and social worlds. This is where the intellectual action is today. Fortunately, you have an excellent guide in Laura Kramer. Welcome to the Sociology of Gender for the 21st century!

Acknowledgments

More than any other group, my students at Montclair State University have contributed to the development of this project. They provided (sometimes painfully) clear feedback on the contents and the form of an early version of the manuscript. They have helped educate me to the many changes in the gender system since I first coauthored a textbook with Laurie Davidson, in 1979. I still felt Laurie's impact, nonetheless, throughout the project, as I felt the presence of Don Reisman, whose work as editor of my text reader in 1990 will always represent to me the best of what an editor can be.

I am indebted to the thoughtful reviews that my manuscript received from eight sociologists of gender across the United States. Their comments, suggestions, and references had a major impact on this volume. Thanks to Bernice McNair Barnett at the University of Illinois-Urbana, Toni Calasanti at Virginia Tech, Lisa Frehill at New Mexico State University, Kathleen Lowney at Valdosta State University, Joya Misra at the University of Massachusetts, Nancy Naples at the University of California-Irvine, Barbara Tomaskovic-Devey at North Carolina State University, and Meg Wilkes-Karraker at the University of St. Thomas.

At Roxbury I found the answer to any author's dreams in my editor, Renée Burkhammer. Her talents as an organizer, her clear and informed thinking, and her eternal good cheer moved me through the production stages. Thanks also to other Roxbury staff, and Roxbury consultants involved from copyediting through cover design. Claude Teweles exemplifies a promising development in college publishing, creating a small and distinguished enterprise in the face of the megamergers of textbook producers.

My colleagues in Sociology and in Women's Studies at Montclair State have been invaluable. Alice Freed and Jack Hammond com-

mented on early chapters. Particular appreciation, for various combinations of instrumental and expressive assistance, goes to Rita Bronnenkant, Ursula Brylinsky, Karen Cerullo, Barbara Chasin, Andrew Feldman, Martha Gimenez, Sue Gleason, Beth Hutchison, Harriet Klein, Carol Kramer, Jay Livingston, Sally McWilliams, Leslie Miller-Bernal, Ann Parelius, Robert Parelius, Carla Petievich, Barbara Repetto, Phyllis Rooney, Janet Ruane, Paul Street, and Gil Zicklin. Colleagues around the globe provided references and ideas (wittingly or not) with their postings to the electronic lists known as WMST-L (the brain child of the wondrous Joan Korenman), SWS-L, and PSN. Kathryn Hammond gently gave honest and constructive criticism, explored the web for goodies, and helped me to keep the long view. Julia Smith-Aman, Georgia Gleason, and Susan Polise were invaluable in preparing the references.

The reference, interlibrary loan, periodicals, and circulation departments at Montclair State's Sprague Library were as wonderful as they have been to me since 1972, despite the mind-boggling speed of change in their technologies. The entire staff is terrific, but the following were most frequently called on for help, and never failed me: Barbara Fingerhut, Louise McNerney, Kevin Prendergast, Luis Rodriguez, Patricia Sanders, Joyce Schaffer, and Tom Trone. This project was materially aided by Phyllis Weisbard, at the University of Wisconsin, and Nicole Cooke, at the Montclair Public Library. Institutional support from Montclair State provided me with essential released time for this project.

Joanna and Nora Gordon, my daughters, have grown up since my last text was published. I depended on Joanna's orienting sessions on popular culture and Nora's knowledge of economics and government statistics—although any errors are my own! More broadly, they both continue to inform me about contemporary society in a myriad of ways (as they have done since they started to communicate). It was only with their support and the support of John Douard that I was able to complete this book.

Introduction

Imagine that you wake up tomorrow and you have become a member of the “opposite” sex. Many things about your day will be unchanged: you will listen to the same music, wear the same clothes (whether blue jeans and a bright T-shirt or all black), go to class, spend some time at a job or hanging with friends, and enjoy the sunshine or complain about the rain. But many things about your day will be different.

For example: If you have become a female, you may spend more time getting yourself ready to leave home. If you have become a male, you will probably have to be more careful about not doing anything that seems disrespectful of other males you encounter in public places. Becoming male may lead you to volunteering for the campus escort service, accompanying students who are concerned about walking on campus alone after dark; if you’ve become female, you may call for an escort. In addition, you may find your family responsibilities have changed. Newly male, you are expected to clear out the trash, or newly female, you are expected to get the dinner started when you return from campus.

Regardless of the change, you won’t drop English Composition or American History to meet graduation requirements. But if you have become male, you will be more likely to major in physics or philosophy than you are today, and if you have become female you are more likely to major in psychology or biology. You may work in a local restaurant today; tomorrow, though, the particular job you have in that restaurant may change. If you were female and waited on tables, you may now be washing dishes. If you were male and waited on tables, that restaurant may not be interested in your services at all. If you

have become male, you may sit further back in the classroom than you did yesterday. Whereas becoming female, you may find some teachers don't call on you when you raise your hand. If you have become female you may feel self-conscious when you realize you are the only nonmale working in the computer lab in the Engineering Building. If you have become male, you may lose the baby-sitting job you have today.

Would these changes in your daily life bother you? Do you assume you'd prefer them, that you would want different things and have different tastes if your sex changed? What if you did not want to go along with these differences? If you objected to such changes in your obligations and responsibilities, privileges and prohibitions, what success would you have? Would your objections be respected, or would it be worth the trouble to object at all? Looking at these questions sociologically helps in understanding the processes that lead us to where we are, and affect our chances of changing our circumstances.

Sociologists study the social meanings that groups build around the physical categories of female and male. We call these physical categories the sexes, just as people do in everyday usage in the contemporary United States. Even though people increasingly also use the word *gender* to refer to the physical categories, sociologists define **gender** as the totality of meanings that are attached to the sexes within a particular social system. More broadly, **the gender system** is a system of meaning and differentiation, linked to the sexes through social arrangements.

In the last hundred years, many of the social meanings attached to being physically female or male have changed. In many ways, gender has become less obvious as a system that influences our lives. In particular, women's opportunities have expanded—from gaining the right to own property, to vote (in 1920), to enter many occupations and professions previously closed to women, and to wear pants rather than skirts to school, work, and public accommodations (such as restaurants). Men's lives have changed as well—with less emphasis on physical strength for establishing one's manliness, greater acceptance of fathers' involvement in the daily care of their children, and the acceptability of wearing more varied and colorful clothes.

In other ways, the meanings of gender have changed, but not lost importance in our lives. For example, young women are not expected to be virgins at marriage (Brumberg 1997). Yet the expectations of the

amount and the circumstances of young people's sexual activity are strongly differentiated between those for females and those for males, with a harsher judgment passed on young women who have had multiple sexual partners than on young men who have done so.

Thus, the gender system has changed a great deal. Sociologists of gender focus on the nature of those changes, the forces that lead to them, and the obstacles to change. If we consider that some contemporary realities of the gender system are not fair, then we can learn from past experiences about the ways that struggles for justice have been successful.

What Is the Sociology of Gender?

The sociology of gender is an important aid to developing an accurate picture of the dynamic gender system, its influence on the lives of individuals and groups, and the kinds of human efforts that have led to a reduction of its impact.

Sociology is the study of people in groups; it examines the whole range of social phenomena—from relationships among individuals in the smallest groups to comparisons of whole societies and patterns of sociohistorical developments. In the study of gender, sociologists explore the meanings of maleness and femaleness in social contexts, examining the diversity of gender systems in various cultures and social groups. Sociologists take the view that gender is **socially constructed**, that is, the differences between females and males are produced by social experience rather than biologically. Sociologists investigate the significant impacts that social meanings of gender have on individual and collective experience, finding ways that social forces influence even physical differences between sexes. For example, the speed of female and of male runners is influenced by opportunities and expectations, rather than being dictated by genetically linked differences.

Sociologists of gender pursue questions about people and **social structure**: the pattern of social relationships and behaviors. They investigate gender in the smallest and most transitory collections, such as strangers' conduct in a public place, to the largest and most stable social groups, such as women's social power in agricultural and industrial societies. What makes an inquiry essentially sociological is the initial and fundamental expectation that patterns observed in so-

cial life are themselves strongly influenced (if not caused) by social forces, such as discriminatory practices and pay scales. The search for social explanations for patterns in society is common to the various and often contrasting sociological theories that shape research projects.

While the sociology of gender does address many popular questions it uses a perspective unusual in the United States, where people tend to focus instead on the personal and psychological. In the pages that follow, the topics may seem familiar, but you may believe the search for answers is misdirected, at least initially. For example, many people within and outside of academia are interested in knowing the responsibilities that each spouse has around the house. It is easy to see a widespread pattern of husbands having fewer responsibilities at home than wives, regardless, it seems, of both husbands' and wives' other responsibilities. In accounting for this imbalance, sociologists are especially likely to look at associated factors such as the differences between husbands' and wives' earnings. In contrast, you may be used to looking only at differences in personality or personal habits and tastes stemming from early childhood experiences.

The important causal role that sociologists expect to find for social forces contrasts sharply with the approaches taken in other social sciences as well as in popular explanations of social phenomena. Sociologists do sometimes focus on small groups, called the **micro-social level**. Even in micro-social studies, however, the sociological perspective differs from the psychological. Sociologists are unlikely to turn to personality or other individual characteristics for fundamental explanations as do psychologists. That is, psychologists more often than sociologists highlight early childhood differences in treatment of the sexes. Psychologists are also much more likely than sociologists to include or even emphasize biological factors in their explanation of gendered patterns.

Thus, sociologists studying how women workers and men workers are distributed into different occupations (such as secretaries and mechanics) will look for causes outside the individual worker. **Opportunity structures**, patterns of easier access to some positions than to others, exist before a person enters the labor market. When considering her or his possibilities, the person usually ignores jobs apparently held only or mainly by members of the other sex. This is especially likely if those jobs have significantly lower rates of pay than jobs held by people of one's own sex. Psychologists may want to

know why some people choose jobs culturally defined as gender-inappropriate, but sociologists are more interested in the existence and persistence of occupational sex segregation, and its consequences for social life.

In sum, most sociologists think that when a person's characteristics conform to societal expectations, it is a result of the social contexts of their earlier experiences and current situations, and not due to inevitable, biologically determined sex differences. We emphasize the ways that people's surroundings draw out particular behaviors from what is usually a broader repertoire of an individual's behaviors.

Contemporary sociologists view social life itself as gendered: experiences, opportunities, and burdens are differentially available to males and to females because of social views about maleness and femaleness. The closing off or opening up of opportunities often occurs even for people who do not fit gendered expectations. For example, if nurturance is defined specifically as feminine, men will not have a chance to show that they are sufficiently nurturant to be hired as child care workers.

In other words, social definitions of gender contribute to the **social stratification** of society and smaller social groups within it. Social stratification is the differentiation among people (on the basis of their membership in categories socially defined as significant) and the accompanying differences in their access to scarce resources and in the obligations they bear. To varying degrees, sociologists of gender focus on the ways in which particular combinations of gender, race and ethnicity, and social class are socially defined as justifying unequal social treatment.

Sociologists also view individuals' behavior as leading to changes in the social world. We study individuals' **agency**, or active approach to finding ways to participate in, adapt to, or change their circumstances. Although agency may be limited to creating means to survive within difficult social arrangements, it sometimes produces changes in the environment. Individually or together, people may affect their immediate (micro-social) surroundings. Human history is filled with stories of people changing the patterns in their societies or even globally. These national, multinational, and international levels are **macro-social**. Currently, many people in the United States are participating in activities aimed at ending the international sexual tourism trade, which involves the prostitution of ever younger women and girls. This struggle includes people around the world who pressure

governmental bodies to condemn child prostitution and to adopt programs that put muscle behind the condemnations.

Clearly, there is a **middle level** of social life, between units as big as nations and as small as a sociology class. Much of our micro-social life takes place within such middle-level settings as colleges, workplaces, and churches. When individuals actively attempt to change or to sustain existing arrangements, it is the middle level that may be most crucial for their focus—for example, if a married couple chooses to share equally in the care of their infant, their ability to arrange suitable schedules at their workplace, and their ability to earn prorated pay rather than to take a steep cut in earnings because of a change to part-time worker. So the micro-social decision making about how the birth of the child may change the marriage is really not just about the couple. Indeed, they will have to work around the demands of their employers. In a strong economy, where their employers are eager to keep workers on, the couple may have an easier time working out a good arrangement. But, a couple at the low end of the economic scale will probably not have such cooperative employers, nor the savings to afford losing earnings while being new parents. In other words, the macro-social level influences the middle-level and micro-social possibilities. Using the concepts of these three levels helps sociologists to zero in on a particular question, but the three levels are actually always simultaneously important in understanding social life.

Thus, sociologists have a fundamental and broad assumption of the primacy of social factors in explaining many aspects of people's lives. We agree on the impact of **socialization**, or the process of learning the rules of the social group or culture to which we belong or hope to belong, and learning to define ourselves and others within that setting. We also agree on the impact of **social control**, the term for the myriad rewards (such as expensive wedding presents) and punishments (such as the famous fictional *Scarlet Letter* that Nathaniel Hawthorne's heroine was forced to wear for having had an adulterous relationship). Similarly, sociologists agree on the importance of social structure and of **culture**, a people's established beliefs and practices, their design for living. Nevertheless, sociologists have widely divergent ideas about the *best* ways to explain the social world. We do not always agree on the importance of each idea or its relative importance, such as social structure compared to culture, or socialization compared to social control.

This text, however, tends to emphasize the importance of social structural factors and social control, partly to counterbalance most students' familiarity with the prevalent belief in the United States that personality and the individual are the most important sources of difference in one's life experience.

Social Institutions and Social Change

The study of social institutions has a central place in the sociology of gender. A **social institution** is a constellation of activities and ideas that addresses a major area of human need in a particular society. For instance, several basic human needs are addressed primarily and consistently in the institution of the family: sexual activity, reproduction, and the physical care of and early socialization of children. Virtually all people in the United States spend their earliest years in family contexts in which they are exposed to the significant cultural meanings of gender and receive their first and most intense lessons in gender relations on the micro-social scale. The specific relations may vary, but they typically fall within a recognizable range of acceptable behavior. These relations are broadly patterned in our culture even though they are acted out by individuals with unique personalities. Members of culturally diverse subgroups are similarly influenced by forces beyond the personalities of their intimates and themselves. When adults seek intimacy, parenthood, or practical living arrangements in which costs and labor are shared, their choices are limited by the patterns of family and household arrangements of the larger culture and by the particular variants of their immediate social environment. Obviously, the economic situation of a family also affects the alternatives available to its members.

Institutions are characteristically slow to change; major innovations are not easily integrated into institutions. As many activists have learned, new beliefs must eventually be supported by changes within institutionalized arrangements. Without such a process, holders of the new beliefs will remain on the social margin. For example, if a man who takes a paternity leave is subsequently penalized when personnel decisions are made, only those most highly committed to active parenting will consider taking a paternity leave. In contrast, if a father's use of leave is seen as a normal event, and his performance

evaluation is not hurt by it, more men will take advantage of leave programs.

Once institutionalized changes occur, they facilitate the spread of new ideas and behaviors beyond their initial institutional context. For example, when a work organization develops and promulgates guidelines for dealing with allegations of sexual harassment, many individuals will start to think about the nature of male-female interaction in new ways beyond that specific organization. Even if they remain unconvinced that certain acts are harassing, what was previously unexamined becomes open to consideration. Thus, social change at the grass roots may sometimes be prodded by institutional changes.

Institutions change at an uneven pace, with periods of little change and periods of rapid change. For instance, in 1991 President George Bush nominated Clarence Thomas to serve as a Supreme Court Justice. During the constitutionally required Senate confirmation hearings, reports emerged that Judge Thomas had sexually harassed an attorney on his staff, Anita Hill. The confirmation hearings were televised live for three days, and the nation was caught up in a public debate over the meaning of sexual harassment. Without producing consensus about the problem, and with a Senatorial decision to confirm Judge Thomas, the hearings nonetheless changed the ways in which individuals and work organizations regard the topic of sexual harassment.

More generally, the social implications of being female or male have changed rapidly since the late 1960s. Women's participation in the labor force has become typical, even for women with young children. Indeed, with the welfare reform legislation of 1996, the U.S. government embraced a definition of motherhood in which wage-earning activity is more important than child care; previously, Aid to Families with Dependent Children provided a "safety net" for people unable to support their minor children themselves. Now, in both one- and two-parent families, if parents are able-bodied they are expected to work outside the home to support their children regardless of the children's ages, the inadequacies of alternative child care arrangements, and the inability to provide adequately for their children with the wages they are paid.

Men's labor force participation has declined slightly (Tang 1999) but is still **normative**; that is, it follows a social rule, or **norm** for behavior. Despite media portrayals of "Daddio" or "Mr. Mom" charac-

ters, the real “stay-at-home” father remains rare. He is almost always in the labor force, and just working out of his home.

The kinds of work that women and men do, though still quite segregated, have been at least symbolically integrated (for example, the first woman to serve as the U.S. Attorney General was appointed in 1993). In some occupations, such as the legal profession, integration is more than token. Nonetheless, the comparable numbers of women and men in an occupation does not assure full equality; for instance, women attorneys remain very underrepresented in higher-status positions, specialties, and organizations.

Although it is now normative for women to work, it remains socially questionable for a woman to have a high-powered job that involves long absences from her children. If there has been any change in this area, it is towards expecting fathers to join mothers in greater involvement in the lives of their growing children. However, a man whose career keeps him away is considered to be merely in an unfortunate situation, but is not expected to move into a male equivalent of what is called the **mommy track**—a career ladder with limited prospects because the loyalties of women on it are presumed to be greater to family than to job.

The Development of Feminist Scholarship

Feminism is the view that women are oppressed in significant ways and that this oppression should be ended. Even though feminist views have been expressed occasionally for hundreds of years (see Mary Wollstonecraft 1787), the first period of feminist social activism in the United States began in the mid-nineteenth century with the Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention. That struggle focused primarily on equal legal rights for women, particularly the right to vote. The struggle for national suffrage lasted until 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified. Feminist activism decreased after that achievement, as some supporters saw their goal achieved and as others’ differing goals for further progress led to a splintering of movement organizations. The struggle for the right to vote has come to be called the “first wave” of U.S. feminism (although it actually included periods of greater and lesser activism between 1848 and 1920).

"I myself have never known what feminism is.
I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express
sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat."

—Rebecca West, 1913

The "Women's Movement," or the "second wave" of feminist activism, started in the late 1960s and remained intense during the 1970s (see Chapter 6 for more detail about the development of both the first and second waves). As a result, people have come to look at the social world in profoundly different ways. Social conditions that are now considered serious problems were invisible thirty years ago. The practices are not modern but the social perception of them is, and so is the insistence that society confront them rather than deny them.

During the 1990s, young feminists started calling themselves "the third wave," referring to their generation as distinct from those who participated in the "second wave." Third-wave feminists grew up during the 1980s and 1990s backlash against the Women's Liberation Movement. By this time, the achievements and issues of Women's Liberation were taken for granted, rather than considered controversial. Yet, the "third wave" has moved its focus to new challenges opened up by the greater freedoms achieved by the "second wave." For example, questions about combining home and work lives are now different for these women who have a greater range of career opportunities. If one is on a real career track, leaving work to fulfill home responsibilities can seriously damage future opportunities. On the other hand, to maintain a career and develop a partnership, or to parent, or to do all of these, is not viable unless one is a superwoman. Third wave feminists have also grown up hearing about the importance of differences among women.

Cultural symbols that had one meaning in the 1970s have very different, often multiple meanings now. For example, although Madonna's explicit sexuality could be interpreted as catering to the commodification of women (i.e. turning women's bodies into objects with economic value), it is generally interpreted as the embracing of the sexual freedom that women fought to achieve in the 1960s and 1970s (*The Righteous Babes* 1998).

Violence in the home (e.g., wife battering, child abuse, and marital rape) and sexual harassment in the workplace have been focuses of growing intellectual and political activity since the early 1970s. Other problems have more recently gained public attention and are increasingly recognized as serious and widespread; “date rape” is one such newly discussed phenomenon that is actually not new at all. However, studying newly visible problems requires more than becoming aware of their existence, and many scholars argue that other ways of looking at the world are required for achieving a nonsexist understanding of it.

Itself a product of the 1970s wave of the women’s movement, the sociology of gender is a major area of feminist scholarship, with active building of feminist theory and lively debate about what is required for a methodology to be feminist. Because of the centrality of feminism’s belief in the need for change, it is not surprising that feminist scholarship is forthright about the legitimacy of addressing politically important questions in the pursuit of knowledge. It is not always the case that the sociology of gender is conducted from a feminist perspective, but this text is firmly situated in the feminist tradition.

Feminist theory, or feminist analysis, is now being done by sociologists working in many areas. Although it is easiest to see its pertinence in the study of gender itself, feminist analysis is making important contributions to other sociological specialties as well as to other disciplines (see England 1999; Ferree et al., 1999). For example, child psychologists had long studied the influence of “maternal deprivation,” which referred to children whose mothers spent the day at a workplaces as well as children whose mothers had died or were otherwise permanently absent. When the question was reframed to consider the impact of “maternal absence,” researchers were more likely to see neutral or positive impacts on children as well as negative ones.

Leading Perspectives

A wide range of perspectives can be called feminist even though media references to feminists and feminism typically assume that all feminists think the same way (for an excellent introduction see Lorber 1998). In three decades of active feminist scholarship, numerous scholars have tried to categorize the major feminist perspectives. This is somewhat ironic because much feminist work actually criti-

cizes the use of categories and types, for prematurely closing off inquiry.

To use an everyday analogy, if you are deciding what to eat for your next meal, you may think about the food pyramid and plan around that nutritionally sound way of categorizing foods. But you may just as well plan around your budget, or around your interest in chocolate, carbohydrates, or calcium. If you are a messy eater wearing a white shirt, you may categorize foods by whether they leave stains. You don't always think about foods in the same way; your focus will vary on the basis of your situation. For example, do you need to load up on carbs, or to keep your clothes clean, or to watch your spending, or to maintain sweet breath because you have a job interview after lunch?

So what follows is not "the one best way" to categorize sociologists of gender; instead, it is a sketch of a few of the perspectives gender sociologists most often use as they try to understand the gender system. Each of these is concerned with somewhat different sets of questions about the social world, and each gives rise to hypotheses that emphasize different aspects of the social world. When scholars use different perspectives to address similar issues, they tend to look for different causes. For example, many researchers are interested in the current phenomenon of young women's eating problems, but differ in where they look for both causes and solutions. While some authors explicitly identify the perspective from which they work, many actually use more than one perspective. Of course, scholars starting from the same perspective do not always agree on all questions.

Even though theorists continue to disagree on the most accurate schema for these viewpoints, I will use five categories that I find useful in looking at gender scholarship and at the social world. A common categorization scheme of the 1970s and 1980s included liberal feminist, socialist feminist, and radical feminist approaches. In the United States, multiracial feminism and postmodern feminism have been developed more recently. Some perspectives complement one another while focusing on different questions, but others actually have contradictory premises. Nonetheless, each provides us with useful insights. Rather than viewing the lack of agreement on a single perspective (and even a lack of agreement on how to categorize the variety of viewpoints) as symptomatic of a problem in feminist studies, such a variety of perspectives indicates the robustness of the field.

More than any other perspective, this text takes a **multiracial feminist perspective**, developed in recent work, particularly by feminist sociologists of color (see, for example, Dill and Baca Zinn 1996; Glenn 1999). This approach is **intersectionist**, in that it highlights the combined meaning of race, class, and gender (and, sometimes, additional dimensions, such as age and sexuality) in formulating questions and looking for answers about gender. For example, we cannot understand the situations and experiences of African American women by simply adding up what we know about the situations of some “average” woman and some “average” African American person. An African American woman may suffer more or less than the sum of the discriminatory treatments experienced by the “average” member of these two categories separately (Crenshaw 1989). In addition, multiracial feminism makes the important point that race and class are relevant even in research limited to white middle-class women. Their lives are influenced by racial and economic divisions, typically to their advantage (Smith 1999). To ignore that influence is to give a partial and distorted explanation for the situation of those white women who are studied (Frankenberg 1993).

The multiracial approach tends to look for causes of gender-related problems in macro-social and middle-level arenas. It emphasizes the importance of social structure in shaping the inequalities in opportunities and obstacles. These structural factors are associated with some combination of cultural beliefs about race, sex, age, sexuality, and economic position. This complexity adds to the accuracy this view provides. At the same time, it is difficult to pay attention simultaneously to all dimensions of difference. Sociological tradition values the development of generalizations and working toward the development of abstract theories that explain many observations of the social world. However, the emphasis on difference can slow down progress toward generalization and theory building.

Particularly with the move toward intersectionality, sociologists have come to recognize the multiplicity of femininities and masculinities. Doing gender, or trying to be womanly or manly, has different meanings depending on one’s location in the social structure (Connell 1995). For example, a working-class man may establish his masculinity by his physical strength or his physical bravery (e.g., fire fighting), while an upper-middle-class man is able to establish his masculinity by providing a very comfortable home and other material assets to his family. Although physical strength and bravery are dominant as mea-

asures of masculinity in youth, economic achievement is the highest indicator of adult manliness. Indeed, a very wealthy middle-aged man who is not physically attractive or strong may marry a trophy wife—a younger and attractive woman who symbolizes his achievements.

Nonetheless, in the absence of opportunities to achieve economic success, that most prestigious and powerful version of manliness, there are alternatives available to men. Those born into settings with no visible hope of economic success may not think of their versions of masculinity as second best. However, that is the assessment of the larger culture.

Thinking about eating problems, Thompson (1992) uses a multi-racial feminist perspective. She argues that eating problems, rather than “disorders,” is a more accurate term. It does not locate the source of the trouble in the individual, as disorder implies. Indeed, she argues that eating problems may stem from rational choices (such as the choice to become less attractive to lower the chances of being sexually victimized). She challenges the race- and class-limited explanation of eating disorders that focuses attention solely on the “cult of thinness.” For example, she discusses eating as one of the few enjoyable, reliable activities in some women’s lives and views overeating as a choice rather than a compulsion.

More recently, Hesse-Biber (1996) describes an increased interest in thinness among young, occupationally successful African American and Latina women. She suggests that white, middle-class ideas about body shape are spreading, shared along class lines. Clearly, an intersectionist approach will develop a more accurate picture of the extent and kinds of eating problems in contemporary U.S. society. Such accuracy will help design more effective solutions to the variety of eating problems.

Socialist feminism and racial and ethnic studies were the leading influences in the development of multiracial feminism. **Socialist feminists** view patriarchy and capitalism as equally important forces in explaining the inequalities in society. They study how differences among men (in their access to power and other resources) help to explain the different ways in which men exploit women. Thus, economic stratification among men as well as women is viewed as an essential part of the contemporary system of **patriarchy**, or social domination by males over females. Feminists who were socialists developed this position in reaction to the secondary position most

socialist theorists traditionally assigned to gender in their explanations of social life (England 1999).

Socialist feminists often look at how patriarchal beliefs divide groups that might otherwise unite and unseat the economically powerful through coalition. The socialist feminist is interested in the economically disadvantaged of both sexes and all races, in people of color of both sexes and all economic positions, and in women of all races and economic positions. Socialist feminists would not disagree with a multiracial feminist view, but as a matter of practice have emphasized social class over racial ethnic differences in seeking explanations of inequality. Thus, socialist feminists emphasize the interest that people in power have in maintaining the status quo. They focus on the social relations of power (especially economic power) that enable men to control women (Sokoloff 1980, 154). A socialist feminist approach to current eating problems might focus on the enormous commercial investment that companies have in creating and maintaining women's obsession with size, shape, and muscle tone (see Brumberg 1997).

Radical feminists view gender as the crucial dimension dividing people. They focus on how males dominate women through a system of supporting beliefs and social structures. Power differences among women, and the role of other dimensions of difference, such as class and race, are not central to a radical feminist analysis. Although narrow, this perspective can provide a useful analysis by generalizing about women's experiences where such generalizations are appropriate. For example, a radical feminist approach to eating problems might look at the ways in which women's explanations for failure to achieve are based on their belief in their personal inadequacies rather than on discriminatory practices in everyday life. A radical feminist might focus on the greater demand for resources of time, energy, and money required for women to meet standards of appearance required to be occupationally or socially successful. Although a multiracial feminist might argue that there are important differences among women in the appearance expectations related to jobs, any explanation of body problems in the United States will be more robust if it recognizes the relatively greater emphasis on women's appearance compared to men's.

Liberal feminism views social change as achievable through reformist rather than extreme efforts. Liberal feminists often view limited access to opportunities as the central problem of gender inequality.

ity. They would remove sexist barriers by educating those who stand in the way of an egalitarian society. An emphasis on socialization (teaching individuals beliefs that are nonsexist, to replace sexist beliefs) characterizes liberal feminist strategies. Consequently, the questions most often asked by liberal feminist researchers are concerned with socialization, and with the organizational and governmental barriers to individual achievement. They do not focus on the underlying stratification of U.S. society, which lacks enough desirable opportunities to go around. They do not challenge the scarcity that remains, even if the scarce positions are more fairly distributed. Instead, they focus on "leveling the playing field" so that the odds of an individual's success are not gender-biased (see Lorber 1998). Thus, they argue for changing laws and organizational practices to make women's chances to achieve equal to men's. But they don't focus on the structure of rewards and costs that are associated with various positions, and the inequities among them.

A liberal feminist approach to the "body problem" might focus on differences in the importance of appearance for male and female candidates for jobs or promotions. Unlike a similarly focused radical feminist critique of employment practices, though, a liberal feminist would turn her (or his) attention to the challenge of the optimal arrangements (within organizations or through the legal system) to undo this form of discrimination.

A society that is "sex-blind" in chances for individual achievement may still be profoundly inequitable. Indeed, even if we were all highly motivated, hard-working and well-qualified, the opportunity structure does not provide enough well-rewarded positions for us all to attain what we "deserve." Liberal feminists have generally not studied the experiences of people who are disadvantaged because of their race or ethnicity, their social class position, or both. Multiracial feminists challenge the narrowness of liberal feminism's focus; they emphasize limitation in the opportunities of socially disadvantaged women, rather than any socialized incompetence in the public world, to best explain their continued inequality. Finally, liberal feminists are less attentive to the ways in which interests conflict between those who lose under sexist arrangements and others in society.

Although it is not a central perspective in the sociology of gender, **postmodern feminism** makes some unique contributions to our understanding of women in contemporary society. At the core of postmodernism is the drive to unsettle or destabilize existing assump-

tions about how the world works. Postmodern thinkers emphasize the temporary and local nature of reality. Because they view life as socially constructed, they see it as ever changing, often profoundly. In our context, postmodernism has been important in questioning the categories we use, as U.S. sociologists, as feminist social scientists, or more generally as participants in contemporary American society and culture (Lorber 1999). Perhaps the most challenging is the position that even the two sexes are categories that are socially created, rather than existing biologically (see, for example, Stoltenberg 1990).

Challenges such as this are fruitful devices that make it easier for us to “break frame,” “step out of the box,” or overcome assumptions that have kept us from seeing aspects of the world because they don’t fit what we expect. The importance of this contribution cannot be overstated. However, the postmodern approach is fundamentally contrary to the sociological, because it disputes generalization and generalization has always been part of the essence of the field of sociology.

The Study of Men

Each of the feminist perspectives highlights fruitful areas of inquiry, but would by itself draw an incomplete picture. Thus, ignoring the ways in which the culture is brought home to individuals through socialization would leave us with many puzzles about how people’s behavior apparently contradicts their self-interest and how changes in institutions lead to changes in individuals’ worldviews. Thus, a singular focus on patriarchy would divert attention from the common ground that women and lower-status men share. Similarly, a singular focus on members of lower racial or class categories would take attention away from the divisive impact of patriarchy among women of varied class and race categories. Finally, failing to learn more about men *as men* limits our understanding of women, because gender is relational. The social meanings attached to femaleness or maleness depend, then, on the comparisons to the other sex and gender.

Early in the study of gender, attention was paid mainly to the ways in which sexism limited the lives of females. As in the popular culture, the social constraints on men’s lives were rarely considered problematic. In part, this inattention reflected the view that behaviors usually

considered out of bounds for men (such as the public expression of emotions other than anger) were unimportant or even undesirable because these were associated with women.

Limits on men were an integral part of the justification for men's superior position in the stratification system. For example, men are less free than women to show feelings of panic or helplessness; but women are excluded from certain positions because of their very freedom. Women have been considered unreliable—they might panic, or act helpless! If men were allowed to do so as well, the sex-typing of such positions would be undermined. However, some people now reject this notion and believe that women can serve well even in positions like combat soldiers. Perhaps with the basis of women's exclusion being eroded, men's emotional toughness may be less useful in justifying their dominance, and they may be freer to appear emotionally vulnerable. Indeed, some men have noted that this is an effective way to present themselves when they want to appear attractive to a woman!

The study of men *as men* is a growing interdisciplinary area within the social sciences and humanities (Brod 1987; Connell 1995). It reflects in part the increased recognition of cultural values other than economic and political power. For example, there is a growing acknowledgment of men's increasing involvement in parenting, and so a growing interest in learning more about that involvement.

Contemporary feminist analyses can also be thought of as falling along a continuum of perspectives on differences between women and men. At the **difference** or **maximalist** end, feminists "focus on sexual and procreative oppression and . . . valorize women's procreative, sexual, and nurturance proclivities." In contrast, **equality** (as sameness), or **minimalist**, feminists "advocate equality based on a minimization of gender differences." The difference position makes the mistake of "treating all women as mothers (or as motherly) which we clearly are not" (Lorber 1989, 158). On the other hand, the equality position provides no intellectual approach to gender inequalities related to the still-significant differences in family-related aspects of women's and men's lives. Gender scholarship needs to be alert to the traps of the extreme positions on the continuum.

Feminist Methods of Inquiry

Conceptualizing questions, choosing subject matter for study, defining the basic strategy of a research project—all are influenced, even if unconsciously, by the values and worldview of the researcher. Until the feminist activism of the 1960s and 1970s, social research was blind to the importance of gender. Men dominated the social organization of scholarship, and for men gender was not problematic—it did not appear to cause them less-than-equal treatment.

Many studies included only male respondents; it was simpler to limit the sample to only one sex, and men were assumed to be the sex to study. An early strategy to improve scholarship, nicknamed “add women and stir,” brought women into the topic to be studied, but did not rethink assumptions about the topic that were rooted in its male-focused research tradition. This limited approach has been rejected as inadequate. Instead, investigative strategies and their theoretical bases have to be rethought. As long as research questions were designed with a single “normal” experience in mind (usually that of a middle-class white man), central issues were likewise ignored.

In the first decades of research on wife battering, most studies focused on the kinds of individuals involved in battering and the relationships in which battering occurs, searching for explanations in individual characteristics without reference to the larger social, political, and economic environment. Instead, as Fine (1989) argued, a feminist approach to studying wife battering would include questions about cultural and social influences. What aspects of the larger environment actually foster battering, what aspects simply take it for granted, and what aspects work to reduce domestic violence against women?

Even when researchers focus on topics including women and women’s interests, the manner of thinking about central ideas needs attention. For example, when Sacks (1988) studied the drive for unionization at the Duke Medical Center, she identified leadership activities that were different among women than among men. Being the spokesperson in large meetings or the representative to outsiders is central to the male norm for leadership. If being defined as a leader were based only on being a spokesperson, the significant daily contributions of women leaders would be ignored. Instead, Sacks broadened the definition of leadership to include the importance of developing and maintaining group commitment.

Many feminist scholars have criticized the process of gathering evidence for sophisticated quantitative strategies without first conducting basic ethnographic research. They suggest that we cannot frame the phenomena we want to study without first broadening our understanding of their range of meanings for all the people involved in the phenomena. Elaborate analyses of evidence conducted on large samples encourage the belief that conclusions are valid. However, the validity is questionable if the evidence was gathered without attention to important dimensions. For example, before we can do a large survey of undergraduates to find explanations of gender differences in majors, we need to speak in depth with some students to develop the survey questions themselves. We may assume women avoid mechanical engineering because of their misperception that they would get greasy doing it; but through ethnographic work, we might find out that professors in mechanical engineering are more likely than, for example, professors in chemical engineering, to assume that theirs just isn't a field for women. Sprague and Zimmerman (1989) argue that an effective feminist methodology will require a reconstruction of methods to include an integration of aspects of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Regardless of their position in the ongoing debate about the particular methods that are consistent with feminist inquiry, most people accept that researchers should make their assumptions explicit so that others may be alert to possible distortions. This view of knowledge has contributed significantly to progress toward more valid approximations of truth through intellectual effort.

Technology and Social Change

For much of the twentieth century, U.S. sociology emphasized a view and explanation of social reality as stable; questions of how change occurs were tacked on almost as an afterthought. The shift to change-oriented analysis, which began to gather steam in the 1970s, is particularly well-suited to the study of gender. Because of changes both in the status of women and men in many arenas and in the ways in which scholars have approached gender (in the development of theories, the re-creation of methodologies, and selection of research questions), the field has grown and changed remarkably within its relatively short existence. A view of social life as *normally* dynamic

rather than static is integrated throughout this volume; in the final chapter, we focus particularly on social change and the future.

An important impetus for changing gender relations comes from developments in technology. For example, lack of control over the timing of pregnancies often undermined both employers' and individual women's willingness to invest resources in job training. The development of increasingly reliable contraception removed a major obstacle to women's employment possibilities (Goldin and Katz 2000).

Nevertheless, existing social arrangements are important in explaining the directions and implementation of technological innovation. Thus, research into the development of new contraceptive technologies continues to assume that women are primarily responsible for contraception, and that their biology rather than men's should be tinkered with.

The design of new technologies is typically intended to be consistent with cultural norms regarding gender, race, class, and age. However, unintended consequences of new technologies sometimes lead to changes in the culturally dominant forms of masculinity and femininity, and to changes in distribution of power in the system of gender. For example, the reliability of the birth-control pill allows single women to be sexually active without depending on a male partner's cooperation with the use of a condom.

Even where no change in the gender hierarchy results from a particular technological change, this innovation may well have implications for the everyday realities of gendered roles. Thus, the microwave oven (based on a technology initially designed decades before) was developed and became a household "necessity" only in the 1970s, when more and more women were working outside the home. Nonetheless, planning meals (even those to be cooked or reheated in the microwave) remained largely the woman's responsibility. Indeed, when the microwave enabled a greater variety of meals to be prepared with relatively little effort (compared to the pre-microwave era) those responsible for household shopping and menu planning were expected to provide for the individual likes and dislikes of each family member. The shopping and menu planning may have become more complex, counterbalancing any time gained by using the microwave oven. Thus, we see that technological innovations are themselves social products, rather than objectively inevitable.

ble developments; they are influenced by the gender system as well as influencing it.

Similarly, mechanization decreased the importance of physical strength in men's labor, although it was not intended as a means of interfering with gender arrangements. Physical strength is now largely irrelevant in most jobs, and working-class men have to turn elsewhere to establish their masculinity. You will encounter other instances of the "chicken and egg" relationship between gender systems and technologies in this book.

Looking Ahead

You started the chapter with a "thought experiment" about the impact on your life if tomorrow you switched your sex. Much of your challenge would involve changing how you present yourself (through symbols and language) and how you interpret others' words and appearance. As you move through the following chapters, keep this experiment in mind. In the next chapters you will examine culture (Chapter 2) and how people learn about it (Chapter 3).

Most of the implications of your "switching" would depend on how the social institutions in which you participate are themselves gendered. The following chapters examine three major social institutions: the family (Chapter 4), the economy (Chapter 5), and the political and legal systems (Chapter 6).

Finally, this book will focus on social changes both intentionally and unintentionally affecting gender relations and gender systems (Chapter 7). This last chapter will help you to think about what the outcome of that experiment might be if you repeated it in 2025, and what might happen between now and then to create a new outcome.

Discussion Questions

1. The chapter began with a thought experiment in which you woke up as a person of the other sex. Now imagine that you wake up as a person of that sex, but it is 2026. Do you expect the implications of this "sex change" to be less broad, or about the same (or even more important)? Why do you think so?

2. One of the traditional ways in which sociologists learn about the world is by observing it as they participate in it. Which of your ideas about how the world works do you think you might reconsider if you observed it as a person of another sex, racial-ethnic group, and social class?
3. At this point, what do you think are some of the most interesting (or puzzling, or disturbing) patterns of gender in contemporary life? Which of the feminist perspectives described in this chapter seems best suited to pursuing these topics, and why do you think so?

Culture and Ideology

The culture of a people is their established beliefs and practices. It serves as a design for living, transmitted from one generation to the next, and usually slow to change. The view of the world taken for granted in a culture includes ideas of what must inevitably be, what is most attractive or unattractive, and what is moral and immoral. Even for a “nonconformist,” culture influences individual choices, if only because one anticipates having to cope with the reactions of others. Nevertheless, culture is not all-determining. As a design for living, a culture must be general enough to apply to diverse situations in a modern society. This often allows individuals a range of culturally acceptable behaviors from which to choose. Even though immigrants, and their children, retain some aspects of their original culture, they also learn U.S. culture. The United States culture is enriched by the multiplicity of other cultures from which immigrants have come; but for the most part, American culture shapes the way of life of immigrants’ descendants.

This chapter provides an overview of the cultural *content* regarding gender, and the cultural *vehicles* that transmit the content. We will look at the messages about gender found in language and media, and consider to what extent people actually absorb cultural messages about gender. Similarly, the social institution of religion encompasses a wide range of messages about gender. It exemplifies the ongoing struggle to redefine the relative authority of females and males. Science and social science are cultural practices themselves, and we will look at culture’s impact on scientific work about sex and gender. We will also focus on the processes of cultural change, highlighting the

relationships between social structure and culture to explain why cultural content develops in some ways and not others.

Ideologies of Gender

All cultures have accorded sex and gender a central place in explanations of how the world is and should be. Most significantly, every culture of which researchers know has been patriarchal to some degree. In some cultures, certain women's positions may have a great deal of authority (for example, grandmother or midwife). Further, there are numerous instances of groups in which individual women achieve exceptional authority. Such an arrangement has never been the cultural ideal, however. Often women have authority only in the absence of men, and when men become available (for example, when they return from war) they again occupy the positions of authority.

The ideas, norms, and even the *things* created and used as part of a culture's way of life carry implicit and explicit significance for females and males in a society. For example, the acceptable language, posture, dress, and tasks for one sex are often different from those for the other. To be viewed as **gender appropriate** one must follow the norms applicable to one's sex. Biological differences between the sexes is a universally popular, essentialist explanation for their social differentiation. However, the behaviors labeled as masculine and feminine actually vary from one culture to another, and within a culture they vary over time, supporting the view that gender is socially constructed.

In some cultures, a task may be seen as appropriate for women, and men may be completely excluded from its performance. Other cultures may assign the same task only to men. The *importance* and *flexibility* of these socially constructed notions of what is gender appropriate vary as well. Thus, there may be a third group of cultures in which that same task is usually associated with members of only one sex, but in which it is not unknown for members of the other sex to take part. Finally, in some cultures, that particular task may be equally likely to be performed by a man or by a woman. Likewise, one culture may vary over a long period of time in its norms about what is gender appropriate. For example, in the United States deliver-

ing a baby was originally “women’s work”; it became “men’s work” and is now performed by both women and men.

There has also been a great range in the degree of male dominance itself: in its breadth (the range of activities affected) and its depth (the degree of social inequality based on sex). In some cultures, women have had avenues to authority in particular spheres, although achieving this authority has been harder for women than men. In others, the subjugation of women has been virtually total, with no area of social activity in which women could gain authority. Being a man has been a necessary, though far from sufficient, requirement for gaining authority in these more restrictive patriarchies. Cultures have also varied in the degree of inequality among the social categories—those with authority and those without it. For example, contemporary women in the United States experience far less sexist oppression than do women in societies in which women are viewed as the chattel of their fathers, husbands, or other male kin (Ridd and Calloway 1987). However, in the United States, gender continues to be salient in all kinds of aspects of people’s lives, from the ways they are expected to speak and walk to the ways they expect to earn a living. Thus, the particular meanings of gender may have varied dramatically over time, but the breadth of gender’s influence in this society continues to be far greater than the impact of most other characteristics we use to categorize people.

The patriarchal essence of a culture is rarely baldly stated; rather, it is understood as natural and inevitable. Powerful groups dominate, in part, by creating and perpetuating a set of cultural beliefs and practices that legitimate their power. This **hegemony**, or domination, is usually invisible. The dominant ideology of a culture includes narratives that legitimate the patriarchy of the system along with other characteristics of the society’s organization. Patriarchal ideologies have varied, with diverse and sometimes mutually contradictory approaches, but religious and scientific doctrine have typically played leading roles in legitimating men’s dominance. Most legitimations of patriarchal arrangements depend on **essentialist** ideas about women and of men, ideas which hold that many gender differences are actually biologically shaped. Although members of subordinated groups may be skeptical of some cultural messages, they may be endangered if they publicize their alternative views, or simply laughed off by members of dominant groups. For example, if women are believed to be naturally monogamous, those who prefer multiple partners will be

punished (formally or informally) for making their preferences known.

Differences in the hegemonic beliefs about gender appear not only between cultures, but also within a culture at different times. Even so, it is possible to sketch the most common and fundamental content of traditional U.S. patriarchal ideology. Perhaps the most basic theme is the belief in men's superiority, which is used to justify men's authority over women. Some of the important alleged differences that have been used to argue men's superiority are a superior male intellect, men's freedom from rule by emotions or intuition, and greater physical strength. Finally, in this view, anything of value must have been created by a man.

In patriarchal ideologies, men and men's characteristics are considered "normal." Any ways in which women are not like men are ways in which women are considered inferior to men. Consequently, in areas of life where men and women typically differ, the standard arrangements are tailored to men's characteristics rather than women's. For example, jobs may require mandatory overtime hours or rotating shifts, or both; these are feasible for people with freedom from child care responsibilities but not for people primarily responsible for child care. That is, being free to go to or stay at work when needed is considered "normal" and having to juggle work and family is not.

Traditionally, women are considered either pure or evil. The former are thought to need protection from men's aggressive sexuality, and the latter are thought to take advantage of it through calculated seduction. The vulnerability of pure women to men and of men to temptresses is based on the belief in men's uncontrollably strong, biological sexual drive. Women (who may be evil) must, therefore, be controlled in order to prevent their taking advantage of men's vulnerability to these urges, and to protect them (if they are pure) from men's acting on those urges.

The victimization of real women is often explained by their presumptive evil. For example, the immoral behavior of prostitutes was suggested as the motivation for their murder by a serial killer during the late 1980s. Furthermore, when violence is done to any woman, it is routine in the popular interpretation of the act to question whether she was actually, if not obviously, an evil woman who brought the violence upon herself (Caputi 1989).

Situating Gender-based Ideology Within Culture

Historical periods differ markedly along many significant dimensions. They vary in what are seen as the most authoritative sources of knowledge (for example, church, state, or institutions of scientific knowledge). Periods also vary in their systems of material subsistence (for example, hunting and gathering, agricultural, and industrial societies), and in the organization of ownership (individual, household, clan, cooperative, or corporate). Each of these dimensions has been correlated with different degrees of male domination. Finally, systems of government—fiefdoms, monarchies, colonizers, democracies—have been related to differences in gender systems. As Connell argues, even while patriarchy is found across profoundly different types of social organization, the dominant versions of masculinity and of femininity within the existing ranges are defined by the economic and politically dominant forces at the time (1995). For example, as a colonizing society needed its population to dominate the colonized, physical strength and aggressiveness were highly prized. Two hundred years later, when most of the population of the former colony works in large-scale organizations, physical aggressiveness is less desirable. Lower status men may still use physical strength to define themselves as masculine, but that definition is no longer dominant, or hegemonic, among the variety of definitions in that culture's repertoire. In this case, a man may believe himself more masculine because he is physically stronger than another, more economically successful man. However, people in the larger society will not agree.

The doctrine of "separate spheres" exemplifies a historically powerful ideology of gender. A central part of the teachings of Western religions, this doctrine stated that males and females should dominate in different kinds of social activities because of purportedly essential differences in their biological and psychological natures. The doctrine of separate spheres took on a new meaning with industrialization, as men and women literally spent their working days in different places. Before industrialization, work and family life were conducted in the same location, and family members worked together even when their tasks were assigned on the basis of sex. The belief in separate spheres justified relegating women to the home and assigning men to economic work outside it. At the same time, it preserved men's authority in the family, despite the physical segregation of the sexes.



Many schools, YMCAs, and other public buildings constructed early in the twentieth century routed people through different entrances, indicating their physical separation once inside. Photographs of Hillside School, Montclair, New Jersey, taken by the author.

Even some arguments for the enfranchisement of women were based on the view of males' and females' essentially different natures and the doctrine of separate spheres. For example, it was said that if women could vote, their special devotion to the home would ensure an injection of a more humane, family-oriented, life-embracing voice into the electorate while eliminating drinking, brawling, and other forms of deviance. This argument was bolstered by the highly visible contributions of women in morally focused movements of the time, such as abolitionism and prison reform.

The doctrine of separate spheres exemplifies the complexity of cultural beliefs about sex and gender at any given historical moment. While the "woman's place is in the home" ideology reigned, there were nonetheless categories of women who typically worked outside the home. Immigrant women, women of color, and other working-class women were never expected to behave in accordance with the doctrine. The intersection of social class, racial-ethnic, and gender hierarchies narrowed the range of people to whom the doctrine was

thought to apply. Indeed, the ability of privileged women to act in conformity with the doctrine depended in part on the availability of other women to work in the homes and businesses of the affluent. For example, white women used slave or cheap African American or immigrant labor to care for their children and do their housework. The “Mammy” was the stereotyped African American woman who took loving care of white children. Analogous to the virgin or Madonna symbol, the Mammy was asexual and trustworthy. She differed, however, from the white symbol by abandoning her own family to faithfully serve whites. The Mammy contrasted with Jezebel, named for the sexually manipulative Biblical character. Jezebel was the symbolic, sexually predatory African American woman whose nature provoked white men’s sexual approaches (Mullings 1997). Thus, the common sexual exploitation of African American women by white men was redefined to blame the women.

The dominant version of masculinity was unattainable by large numbers of men in the United States. In the public sphere, immigrants, Native Americans, African Americans, and Chicanos were essentially powerless in their relations with and compared to more privileged men. Even within their own families, the authority relations were patriarchal, although often to a lesser degree than in the homes of the privileged (Lorber 1994). In sum, the belief system, or ideology, of patriarchy did not apply generally but was part of a more complex ideology that justified the existing stratification system, with its intersecting social categories and accompanying class and racial-ethnic inequalities.

Just as ideas about gender are dynamic, so are ideas about race and social class, and about the intersection of the three dimensions. For example, Brodtkin (1998) describes the shifting social definitions of Jewish men and women as being “not quite white” (early in the twentieth century). They were accepted as fully white after World War II, but with their Jewish identity kept private if not actually hidden. Most recently, many Jews have moved to a more open acknowledgment of Jewish identity—and a revitalized challenge to their whiteness from members of some extremist white Christian groups. The cultural images of Jewish femininity and masculinity have also shifted (e.g., the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess is an invention of the late twentieth century).

Contemporary Ideologies of Gender

Among contemporary arguments about women's proper place, only rarely does the assumption of separate spheres appear. A worldview that was extremely powerful only three or four generations ago is now regarded by most members of our culture as so old-fashioned that it is completely irrelevant. Even the feminists who argue that women have a different and more humane sensibility than men, do not suggest it would interfere with the exercise of political leadership. Indeed, some difference, or maximalist, radical feminists argue that women's different sensibility makes them superior political leaders.

Current definitions of masculinity and femininity, or the ideological prescriptions of gender, reflect some traditional elements and show the influence of the social changes of the twentieth century. For some time, the idealized man in the United States has been emotionally and economically independent, physically powerful, protective of women and children, and emotionally inexpressive with a strong, heterosexual appetite. Even though feminist activism during the "second wave" resulted in a broadening of definitions of femininity and a real change in the personality characteristics adult women were supposed to have (i.e. shifting from childlike to more adult characteristics), the definitions of masculinity were little affected. Indeed, well after the onset of feminism's second wave, David and Brannon (1976) suggested that men's long-standing normative characteristics (independence, physical power, protector of women and children, and a strong, heterosexual appetite) were still encountered in four culturally dominant versions of masculinity. The "No Sissy Stuff" version emphasizes manliness as the opposite of assumedly feminine qualities, especially openness and vulnerability. "The Big Wheel" is the successful, achieving man. "The Sturdy Oak" is strong, self-confident, and independent. The "Give 'Em Hell" man is aggressive, violent, and daring. The normative characteristics for men may have changed somewhat, with emotional expressiveness and nurturance as now somewhat more acceptable, but most of the traits prescribed for men remain unquestioned.

Homosexuality and bisexuality do not fit the dominant visions of masculinity. Indeed, they are the focus of widespread fear and hatred—**homophobia**. Homophobia is not found in every culture; there are societies in which homosexuality is not subject to the

strongly negative reactions that are common in the United States and other homophobic societies. One explanation offered for the existence of homophobia suggests that homosexuality threatens the beliefs that justify patriarchy. If the idealized model that justifies male dominance is fundamentally inaccurate regarding sexual preference, then the whole model and the bases for male dominance in the society are thrown into question. The reaction to the AIDS epidemic was shaped in part by the cultural power of homophobia. Indeed, homophobia appeared to be declining slightly before the epidemic was strongly identified with gay men in the early 1980s.

Homophobia has become increasingly visible as violent crimes against gay men, and, to a lesser extent, lesbians have gained local and national attention. Another explanation for “gay bashing” has gained credibility, as a pattern seems to emerge of gay bashing by men who are unable to achieve economically—the currently hegemonic definition of masculinity. Men who are economically marginal cannot establish their masculinity as either a “big wheel” or a “sturdy oak.” Gay bashers are enforcing one definition of masculinity (no sissy stuff) by performing another (giving ‘em hell). Frustration with economic marginalization may also be directed against men of color, and women, because of the belief that they have led to white men’s economic woes (Fine et al. 1997).

Traditional visions of femininity prescribe a nurturant, intuitive, vulnerable, asexual, dependent person. These prescriptions have been changing rapidly and explicitly since the second wave of feminism began in the late 1960s. Although changes in women’s roles have been more widely accepted than changes in men’s, there remains a lack of consensus on what femininity does mean. Is it gender appropriate for the mother of young children to work outside the home when she does not “need” to? Is it gender appropriate for a wife to earn more money than her husband?

Based on an intensive study of married “working parents,” Hochschild identified three types of marital role ideologies: the traditional, the egalitarian, and the transitional (1988, 1–17). The traditional wife has less power than her husband and identifies with her activities at home rather than on her job. The egalitarian ideology actually prescribes that spouses should be equally powerful at home, and that they should be and equally invested in their jobs. There were different versions of the egalitarian view, with different ideals for the degree to which people should be invested in their home lives and in

their jobs. Most of the people that were interviewed for Hochschild's study, however, had some form of a transitional ideology. These ideologies represent some point along the continuum from the old (traditional) ideology to the new (egalitarian) ideology. In the transition, the wife's identity involves her work at home and on the job, and the husband's identity is based more on his job than his wife's is on hers. The transitional ideologies varied in particulars, such as the degree of investment of the husband in family matters.

Equality of the sexes will not arrive simply as the result of the gradual broadening of definitions of acceptable behavior and division of power. Lorber (1989) and others have argued, instead, that the continuing power of patriarchal ideology limits just how far gender inequality can be reduced. And research on families whose members want to live in a nonsexist way shows that the gendered arrangement of the larger world in which they exist limits their ability to be gender-blind at home (Risman 1998).

There is a decrease in the range of ways that biological differences between the sexes are seen as pertinent to how men and women live; for example, pregnancy is no longer considered a reason for a woman to stay at home and out of public sight. For some in the United States there is also a decrease in how much we think that gender differences are dictated by biology. Thus, the significant decrease in the difference in speed records of male and female runners has made people aware of the historical role of social expectations on women's athletic achievement. Nonetheless, beliefs in difference continue to be strong, and to serve patriarchy. When a particular belief is authoritatively established to be wrong, an adjustment to patriarchal ideology may be made that allows the belief system to remain strong. This flexibility is reflected in the double standard illustrated in Table 2.1. Perhaps most troubling of all is the persistent assumption (not universal but widely recognizable) that a certain trait is more highly valued by virtue of being associated with males in contrast to females. In other words, as long as beliefs in male superiority and male-as-normal are taken for granted (even by those who do not share these notions but acknowledge their prevalence), the content of any particular sex difference can be questioned without undoing the basis of patriarchy. For example, if a previously male-dominated occupation becomes sex-integrated or female-dominated, it does not raise female status, but lowers the prestige of the occupation (for example, attorneys or accountants).

An important aspect of the current ideology of gender in the United States is the strong belief that gender inequality is no longer an important problem. This belief is produced by three related dynamics, according to Rhode (1997). First, it results from what people perceive directly and the kind of information they receive through education and the mass media. Second, there is a common idea that any perceived gender differences are not unjust: “people often rationalize women’s inequality as the result of women’s own choices and capabilities” (Rhode 1997, 3). Finally, individuals may see themselves as free of responsibility for any injustices they do perceive, as well as free of responsibility to participate in undoing those injustices.

Table 2.1
*How One’s Qualities Are Interpreted
Depends on Who and What One Is*

If a Person Is	Call Her:	Call Him:
Supportive	Bright	Yes-Man
Intelligent	Helpful	Smart
Innovative	Pushy	Original
Insistent	Hysterical	Persistent
Tough	Impossible	Go-Getter
Cute and Timid	A Sweetheart	A Fairy

From: Media Women—New York. 1970. “How to Name a Baby—A Vocabulary Guide for Working Women.” In *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, Robin Morgan (ed.). New York: Vintage Books, pp 59–91.

What About Race and Ethnicity?

At the same time that people in the United States are part of one culture, in some ways we also participate in **subcultures**, or designs for living, sets of beliefs, and practices that are transmitted from one generation to another within a subgroup of the population, usually defined by membership in a particular racial, ethnic, or sectarian reli-

gious group. People whose group membership offers a distinctively different design for living from the dominant culture are often bicultural, belonging to and participating in both cultures. For example, you may speak your grandparents' native language when you talk to them, and English when you are at work or school.

Generalizations about people in one or another racial-ethnic group are common. We often explain everyday life by referring to individuals' backgrounds. Indeed, throughout this text you will find statements about the relationships between racial-ethnic identity and gendered beliefs and behavior. It is important to be aware, though, of the limitations of your ideas about race and ethnicity, and the need for caution in looking at race and ethnicity as a simple cultural dimension that will explain all the diversity in how individuals and groups live gender in the contemporary United States. Such differences are not always due to cultural differences. They may be due instead to differences in the economic situation of racial-ethnic subgroups, to the regions in which they are located (and related differences in economic opportunities), and to the recency of their immigration to the United States.

Generalizations about members of one racial-ethnic group often mask the variations within that group. We commonly refer to a few racial-ethnic categories (i.e., African American, Asian American, European American, Latino, and Native American). However, each of these categories actually includes a variety of ethnic groups, whose economic and cultural situations vary greatly (Zavella 1991). Persons *outside* one of these categories, for example, all *non*Asian Americans, are usually comfortable with broad generalizations about the people within that category. Thus, there is a common stereotype that Asian Americans are economically and educationally more successful than other racial-ethnic groups. In fact, there are significant differences in achievement, for example between Japanese Americans and Filipino Americans. Likewise, Cuban Americans and Puerto Ricans have very different average family incomes. The category "African American" includes both persons descended from many generations in the United States and those who are the children of immigrants from Africa or the Caribbean; these subgroups are also quite different from one another. "White" people (who may be of Latin American as well as European descent) are also heterogeneous.

Language and the Transmission of Culture

Language is the primary vehicle for the construction and transmission of culture; through language, people learn the values, beliefs, and socially defined “facts” of their culture. The power of sharing a culture is implicit in the ease with which we usually understand the verbal and nonverbal communications of others as well as their actions and opinions, even when we do not agree with them. We are amused by fantasies in which creatures from another planet (like those starring in *Third Rock from the Sun*) speak our language literally but fail to understand what we really mean. These characters remind us how much we take our mutual understanding for granted.

Ideas about gender are conveyed through the linkage of specific words to one sex or the other, implicitly or explicitly stating what is culturally defined as male or female. By analyzing the particular words used to describe women only or men only, we can discover the dominant views of what inheres in masculinity and femininity (Kramer and Freed 1991). Men are much more often described with words that connote competence in highly valued spheres (for example, the word *mastery* means “competence” and is derived from a masculine noun), and with words that connote the abuse of power. (How would one describe a female *brute*?) Although being a *nerd* is not hegemonically masculine, it does connote having a high level of technical expertise. Self-identified (male) nerds consider the term masculine; they call female nerds *nerdettes* (Kendall 2000). Women are more often described with words associated with nurturance, softness, and a manipulative sexuality. For example, a *tease* almost certainly refers to a woman. A *sissy* is a boy who is like a girl; in this instance, femininity is obviously negative because it is used to insult a male.

From the eighteenth century until the second wave of feminist activism, rules of English stating that a person is presumed to be male unless otherwise specified went unquestioned (Bodine 1975). Using masculine pronouns to designate a person whose sex is unknown or to refer to the human species as a whole implies that males provide the standard by which “normal” is defined (Miller and Swift 1995). When females, as a group, are considered different from males, they are regarded as exceptional even though they are often a majority of the population.

Another example of male being the norm and female being invisible is the practice of specifying if the particular individual about

whom one speaks is female, as in *woman doctor*, but omitting any gender marker if the individual is a man. Many people assume that a doctor is a man, and most would be startled to hear the phrase *man doctor*. Likewise a nurse is assumed to be female; we hear *male nurse* but never *female nurse*. It appears that increasingly popular gender-neutral terms such as *spokesperson* and *police officer* are applied to women more than men, who are often still *spokesmen* and *policemen*. If the gender-neutral term is used only for females, however, it is not actually gender neutral. Those who read or hear it still assume it refers to a female. This differential highlighting of gender and the use of male as generic indicate the continuing dominance of men.

Many people believe that the sexist connotations of words are simply vestiges of outdated patriarchal ideology, neither accurately reflecting nor influencing contemporary life. In contrast, researchers have shown that language does influence the thinking and behavior of at least some people (Miller and Swift 1995). The new words (such as *sexism*) and new usages that have developed as a result of feminist activism now provide a way for people to think about the gender system.

When a particular component of sexist language is eliminated or a feminist term is coined, it does not necessarily change the underlying system. For example, if *girl* is no longer used to represent an adult female, there are still an enormous number of alternative expressions to communicate the lesser authority of females compared to males. Without a concurrent weakening of belief in male authority, eliminating particular word usages will be inconsequential (e.g., Cameron 1998).

Do gendered themes in language actually influence people's ideas? Although language has an influence on us, it is certainly not all-determining. Often messages are interpreted differently among audiences. For example, does *guy* refer to a male, or is this a gender-neutral term? The gendered content of language is inconsistent in its impact on people. In a classic study, students were instructed to select illustrations for a textbook on the basis of its table of contents (Schneider and Hacker 1973). One version used the word *people* and the other used the word *man*. The researchers found that students with the *man* table of contents were significantly more likely than the other group to select illustrations with only men. Nonetheless, some students even in this group selected sex-integrated illustrations. This finding illustrates the reality of cultural vehicles: we do not always

interpret them in the same way. Just as some people who tell an ethnic- or racially-based joke argue that it is not intended to be insulting, people who use words like *sissy* argue that those who object are overly sensitive. But research that shows the multiple ways in which people interpret language supports the need to take more care with word choice. With increased usage of gender-neutral language, fewer listeners will complain that it sounds artificial and the rate of change will accelerate.

In addition to regarding language as a socializing agent, we might look on conversational behavior for indications of how speakers have been socialized into gendered roles. Despite widespread assumptions to the contrary, most presumed differences in the language use of women and men turn out to be insignificant, inconsistent, or different than expected when they are systematically investigated (Freed 1995). For example, on average, women do not speak more than men, despite the many jokes that assume the contrary (James and Drakich 1993).

As sociolinguists have broadened their attention to include differences, such as one's ethnicity, income level, or social class, the intersection at which an individual is located has also been expanded (Henley 1995). Linguists increasingly study how language practices also vary on the basis of the individual's characteristics of social or group identity, and the activities a person engages in. The characteristics of the other people in an interaction also have a crucial impact on how an individual will speak at any particular moment (see for example Bergvall et al. 1996; Hall and Bucholtz 1995).

Scholars have developed and are reassessing and reinterpreting documented differences in women's and men's linguistic behavior. Thus, the pattern of men's interrupting women more than women's interrupting men does not simply signify a difference in their socialization into a particular set of manners. Instead, it can reflect men's greater power in the particular group being studied. Both men and women interrupt more or less depending on their relative position in a group and on the norms about interruption of the groups they are part of. Men can be more polite, and women less polite, when the balance of power in the talking group changes. That is, the literature increasingly supports an explanation of gendered patterns of speech and conversation that reflect the contexts in which people are speaking. That is, stereotypical women's complaint that men just do not

know how to listen certainly does not describe how men interact with their bosses at work, to whom they usually must listen to succeed.

Mass Media and the Transmission of Culture

The mass media—including television, radio, the movies, music, and the internet—also serve as significant transmitters of cultural ideas about gender (Walters 1999). Their impact is felt both through entertainment-oriented materials and in their presentations of news information and analysis. Media organizations, aiming at profit making, are unlikely to risk audience disapproval and loss of sponsorship by taking unconventional positions. In the same way that institutional cooking avoids herbs and spices because it seeks to satisfy the broadest range of tastes, the commercial media make “safe” decisions in shaping content and messages. Changing aspects of culture are reflected in media presentations only if they are demanded by the audience, although that audience has no easily available means to make such demands, or when they are clearly and strongly backed by evidence drawn from studies of the market. For the most part, the media present a worldview that conforms to the status quo, which includes patriarchal beliefs. Where there is a lack of consensus, issues are often avoided. Thus, a disproportionate number of family-centered situation comedies do not have both parents present. The producers avoid depicting a married couple relationship that might alienate some segment of its audience. Domestic arrangements that might be too traditional for some viewers could be too egalitarian for others; the problem is sidestepped by eliminating the married couple as the basic situation comedy unit. The situation comedy, *Ellen*, made history by featuring a lesbian leading character; however, it was soon off the air.

Traditional heroes, like Rambo, Indiana Jones, and James Bond, now share the limelight of television and movies with men that Garfinkel (1985) calls antiheroes. For example, the leading character on *The Drew Carey Show* is overweight, lives alone, and usually laments his lack of an active sex life. He is certainly masculine in recognizable ways, including having some managerial responsibilities at work, owning a home, and enjoying hanging out with his friends. Frasier Crane and his brother, Niles, are also antiheroes, tolerated by their more traditionally masculine father. Although traditional male heroes abound on contemporary police and courtroom dramas, more

complex male characters are also depicted. Their appearances suggest that the media industry believes that audience ideas about gender have changed. A few “gender bending” celebrities, such as Dennis Rodman, are powerful enough to get air time despite their flaunting of any categorization. However, as cable television permits the increasing specification of a show’s targeted audience, gender images can be more segregated, with shows trying to reflect their desired viewers’ beliefs, rather than introducing some viewers to the newer beliefs that other viewers have adopted.

Novelist Susan Isaacs suggests that television, movies, and fiction feature a growing proportion of “wimpettes” and a shrinking number of “brave dames.” She defines the wimpette philosophy: the beliefs that men are really little boys; men are strong and women are weak; a man is the source of one’s identity. She says that wimpettes use indirection and subterfuge, have low ethical standards, and betray women friends; a wimpette does not take responsibility for her actions (1999, 19–20). For example, the plot of *Melrose Place* was organized around conquest and betrayal among a group of vixens.

Clueless is a film set in Beverly Hills, but based on Jane Austen’s nineteenth-century feminist novel *Emma*. The leading character initially appears to be a wimpette, but eventually turns out to be a brave dame. Brave dames are resilient, competent, have high ethical standards, stand up to injustice (they are “passionate about something besides passion”), and are *true* friends (Isaacs 1999, 12). Films with brave dames are often labeled “chick flicks.” In another example of “male as normal,” action movies, like *Terminator II*, are simply movies—not, for example, “dick flicks.” In some movies and television shows, like *Xena the Warrior Princess*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or *Dharma and Greg*, a highly sexualized brave dame character helps attract a broad audience.

The media communicate ideas about feminism itself. Feminism was portrayed as a civil rights movement during the period of intense feminist activism with its focus on passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ultimately, an unsuccessful effort). In subsequent years however, the media have not developed a coherent framework for presenting news about feminist concerns (Huddy 1997). Neither are concerns about family arrangements defined in U.S. culture as the focus of public activity, because family arrangements are assumed to be the product only of the particular individuals in any one family (see Chapter 4). Concerns about eco-

conomic inequities are not the focus of media coverage of feminism for the same reason that they are little reported otherwise—they challenge hegemonic beliefs in the moral superiority and self-correcting nature of capitalism. This leaves feminism to be presented, now and then, in simplistic terms (like news stories more generally in the current trend to make news into entertainment).

Within entertainment television and film, leading women characters reflect this view of feminism: individual feminists (such as *Murphy Brown*) are working on the problems in their lives as individuals; if they are good at it, they will eliminate those problems. There is no suggestion that their problems are due to social patterns and need to be collectively addressed to actually be solved (Dow 1996). *Judging Amy* shows the complicated life that a single mother leads, even with the power and resources of a judge. Even though some of the problems of the main character (and others in the various plots) could be related to a feminist worldview, such connections are never explicitly made. Amy struggles to do her job well, and to have a happy and equitable home life, but she takes each problem as it arises and never refers in any way to the possibility of working with others to change the arrangements that so often send people to her courtroom.

Although women and men of color are significantly underrepresented in the mass media, it is possible to draw generalizations about those we see. Entertainment and news reports present extremes rather than a realistic range of people. For example, African American men are either celebrities or frightening. African American women tend to be matriarchs (the stern mothers to their own children that Mammies were when they went home from the white families), “welfare queens,” or verbally aggressive women (too much “attitude”)—the latter being a common character on racially integrated situation comedies (Mullings 1997). With the threat of a boycott of network programming, led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the major networks pledged in 2000 to involve people of color in every program. On *Malcolm in the Middle* (on the Fox Network, which produces a preponderance of the programming with characters of color), the main character is a young genius, who is otherwise a normal (white) boy. He and his three brothers and their parents live together. Malcolm’s best friend in his class for super-bright students is an eye-glasses wearing, wheelchair using African American boy, who violates many common stereotypes.

The Impact of the Mass Media

Do movie depictions of very thin women in heroic roles imply that women must be very thin to be beautiful or heroic? Does the absence of Asian American men on television news programs mean that they are insignificant members of society, or is it just a “random” pattern (Fong-Torres 1986)?

Early in the women’s movement, researchers were pressed to document their claims of media distortions. Feminists were accused of exaggerating the degree to which groups were underrepresented and stereotyped. Systematically collected evidence established clear patterns of the overrepresentation of some categories of people (e.g., young people, white males) and the underrepresentation of others (e.g., African American women, Asian Americans, older women of all ethnicities). People were also stereotyped; for example, old women appeared almost exclusively as victims.

After clearly documenting the existence and extent of these patterns, researchers moved to the question of the impact of these expressions. Do the media’s implicit messages shape people’s expectations or behaviors? If so, they represent ways in which the culture is delivered to the individual no matter who that individual has face-to-face contact with. If language and the media influence people, then they are, by definition, instruments of socialization.

As we know from public discussions of violence, one extreme position holds that media depictions are a leading cause of our culture’s violence; others argue that there is no real evidence of a media impact. Certainly most people watch violence without becoming violent. What do we know about the influence of media and of language on people’s ideas and behaviors related to gender? Instead of these dualistic positions (in which either violence makes all viewers violent, or it doesn’t make any violent), research has shown that media have an influence on at least some people. For example, people who have already been unusually aggressive compared to their peers are likely to become even more so when they view violent programming.

People without an aggressive personal history do not typically become more aggressive because they view violent programming. However, higher levels of exposure to violence tend to desensitize viewers to violence. That is, we find violence less disturbing even if we would not consider engaging in it ourselves.

Similar disputes arise about the impact of media stars who smoke on camera, and the unusually thin bodies of fashion models in advertisements. In the 1992 Presidential campaign, Republican Vice-Presidential candidate Dan Quayle accused the nontraditional family life on *Murphy Brown* of undermining American family values. A recent study of college students found that women's exposure to magazines and television shows that focused on thinness, fitness, and personal appearance was related to women's eating problems, concern with thinness, and dissatisfaction with body image (Harrison and Cantor 1997). The authors found that even when the magazines or shows were initially chosen because of women's exceptional concerns about body image, the women's concerns became greater after reading and viewing these media.

The setting in which people consume media, itself affects the kind of influence a presentation may have. Thus, parents are urged to watch television with their children to teach them to think critically about its content. Thinking critically about media content is also more likely among viewers whose experiences contradict the show's content than among viewers who are otherwise ignorant of the subject being depicted.

More generally, the very same show will be seen very differently depending on the background of the viewer and the context of the viewing. In a study of women's viewing of television movies about abortion, pro-choice middle-class and pro-choice working-class women interpreted the plots quite differently. Their class positions were related to how they explained what circumstances had led to the pregnancy and what the pregnant woman's options for the future would be if she did not choose abortion. Middle-class viewers sympathized with a poor woman who chose abortion for financial reasons. In contrast, the pro-choice working-class viewers were critical of financial problems as a reason for abortion. They objected to the portrayal of poor women as victims, unable to create alternative solutions if money was the only barrier to carrying out the pregnancy.

Class positions were much less important for antiabortion women's interpretations of the plot. Instead, their views were largely shaped by a more general sense of being in serious disagreement with many popular cultural beliefs about sexuality and family life (Cole and Press 1999).

Similarly, audiences may disagree about whether a specific character is a strong dame or a wimpette. For example, Isaacs classifies

Ally McBeal as a wimpette, while other feminist critics argue that she is a strong (even if highly idiosyncratic) dame.

No matter how ambiguous the meanings or how critically the audience reflects on the messages, the media have another kind of influence. They influence audiences by what they do *not* show. The absence of alternative representations denies people a source of realistic ideas about groups with whom they have no direct contact (Delgado and Stefancic 1995). In other words, even if skeptical viewers react against the ways the media present the world, those viewers receive little constructive input as they seek alternative perspectives.

Religion and Gender

Religions influence and reflect cultural beliefs and practices. The three major monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—are deeply patriarchal in their teachings. Indeed, the formerly powerful doctrine of separate spheres had its roots in religious teachings. Their fundamentalist forms reject the notion of separating church and state. Even though the Constitution of the United States calls for a separation of church and state, Christianity has been a crucial force in shaping U.S. social life.

Within Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, however, there is wide variation in the content and interpretations of teachings regarding gender and in the ways in which they limit or shape religious participation depending on one's sex. The fundamentalist branches of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam continue to embrace an explicitly patriarchal position, taking a very similar shape (in the separate spheres tradition) across the three religions (Ahmed 1993). Indeed, each relies on its gender-related discourse to reiterate the religion's political and social identity.

The same body of religious writing may be interpreted in very different ways. Reformists in all three—not just Christianity—argue that gender oppression is “against their religion” (though this does not usually include a clear definition of what constitutes gender oppression, nor any acknowledgment that it already exists and is practiced within the respective religious institutions). For example, during the feminist activism of the nineteenth century, some Christian leaders argued that women's second class legal status violated Christian teachings.

Meanwhile, other church leaders found ways to justify women's status inequality on the basis of the Bible.

Since the resurgence of feminist activism in the late 1960s, many religious groups have moved toward the idea of greater equality in their teachings (Sered 1999). Some have adopted new versions of religious texts and songs that incorporate gender-neutral language. Others have moved away from strongly patriarchal language, but without embracing the goal of a gender-neutral liturgy.

The Muslim faith is typically represented in U.S. media as extremely oppressive of women. However, there are wide variations in the teachings and practice of Islam within and among the many countries in which it is followed. Media representations in the United States rarely depict this variability and, commonly, practices that are most different from our own are highlighted. Further, practices, such as the wearing of a head covering, which strike many in the United States as depriving women of equal rights, are not necessarily viewed that way by those who follow the practice. For example, Muslim women wearing head coverings may be leading lives that are otherwise quite nontraditional; in Oman veil-wearing women have high-ranking positions in the banking and information technology industries (*Not Without My Veil* 1993). Women who wear head coverings in public may instead view U.S. women as oppressed by the amount of time, attention, and money they devote to having "every hair in place." Muslim women who wear looser clothing also consider U.S. women as oppressed by the demand that they reveal their bodies, after which women are judged according to narrowly defined (perhaps unattainable) standards of physical beauty.

Religious institutions have much cultural, economic, and political power. Within many religions, groups struggle to retain or to change the beliefs about the social world that are manifest in the religion's doctrine and hierarchy. There is much to be gained or lost from a shift in a church's official position. In 1999, the Southern Baptist Convention issued a policy statement reaffirming its position that the father is the head of the family. As the U.S. church with the largest membership, its affirmation of a non-egalitarian family form made headlines. The position probably strengthened the allegiance of traditional church members. However, it probably weakened the loyalty of some church members who had previously chosen to overlook the traditional teachings. By reaffirming them, however, the Convention made it clear to all that the view of the family is not simply a ritualistic

adherence to older teachings, but a strongly supported view for contemporary life. In the coming years, the impact on the Southern Baptist Church of the adoption of this statement will unfold.

Knowledge Professionals

We are taught to view the findings of science as universally and objectively true, but scientists cannot free themselves completely from cultural influences when they are framing the questions that they decide are important and when they are interpreting the findings of their research.

In the twentieth century, scientific findings were increasingly viewed with the reverence formerly paid to religious pronouncements (see Tavis 1992). Lay people often suspend critical judgment when they hear the conclusions of highly specialized experts. Furthermore, lay people tend not to understand the fundamental point that even properly researched findings may be arguable among scientists. Lay people are often informed about scientific findings selectively, related to the hierarchy of power and prestige among scientists and scientific organizations.

Science is itself a social institution, and it has not been immune to the influences of social forces on its production of knowledge. Indeed, as science has gained power in shaping the beliefs of Americans, it has often contributed to the continuing legitimization of the nonegalitarian aspects of a society founded on an actively egalitarian rhetoric. The study of "sex differences" is an outstanding example of biases and distortions in scientific research in the last hundred years.

When social scientists speak of sex differences, they are speaking of traits that are usually associated more with one sex than with the other in the population as a whole. For example, height is a characteristic in which males *as a group* differ from females *as a group*: the average height of adult males is greater than the average height of adult females. However, many individual females are taller than many individual males. The difference in heights between the sexes is a group, not an individual, difference. In the absence of other information, however, it would be wise to bet that an unknown male is taller than an unknown female. In a large sample, we would probably not lose money on this bet, but we might very well lose if we had only a few pairs of people to bet on. Nonetheless, in discussions of sex differ-

ences, people tend to assume clear-cut differences (such as the presence or absence of female or male genitalia) rather than tendencies (such as the patterned relationship between sex and height). Indeed, the common phrase “the opposite sex” builds in an assumption that differences are stark and contrasting.

Scholars as well as members of the public disagree about which characteristics actually are distributed differently among males and females. Epstein (1988) reviewed social scientific efforts to determine sex differences in personality. Her comprehensive and critical analysis pointed out underlying flaws chronically found in research seeking to establish the existence of sex differences. That is, numerous taken-for-granted ideas about women and men do not hold up with the certainty and absolute truth with which they are popularized by the mass media and in everyday life. Indeed, one of Epstein’s contributions is her clear depiction of social scientists wearing the same blinders as do others in the culture.

In a case of questioning the “male as normal” assumption, labor economist Audrey Freedman (1989) critiqued a *Harvard Business Review* article on the costs of employing women as managers. Freedman pointed out the costs to productivity of employing men. Compared to women, men have higher rates of drug and alcohol addiction, lowering productivity and raising employers’ insurance costs. Men also have a “greater inclination to engage in destructive struggles for control” leading to expensive corporate takeover battles (Freedman 1989). Experts consider these costs normal as long as the actions of the males are considered the norm.

When scholars in other disciplines assume the validity of writings on sex differences, the biased production of knowledge extends its influence further. For example, Gilligan’s thesis (1982) on basic differences in moral development between males and females has been widely reported in the popular press. Unaware that not all social scientists agree that men and women develop different moral schemes (and unaware that much research questions her thesis), many feminist scholars in the humanities build on Gilligan’s ideas without question in their own work.

Finally, cultural biases also affect the thinking and action of biological and medical scientists. For example, Martin analyzes the impact of Western ideas about gender on how scientists have visualized the relationships between the human egg and sperm (1991). Casting the behavior of each in traditional views of gender-appropri-

ate behavior, scientists describe the egg as passive and the sperm as active. The egg's fragility is emphasized, although it lives longer than sperm do. The verbs used to describe the movement of sperm towards the egg also show the influence of gender on scientific imagery. Although scientists might maintain that these language choices are merely metaphors, the metaphors incline the expert to think about certain kinds of actions and not others, depending on the gendered character of the discussion. This creates obstacles to imagining other ways of thinking about the egg and the sperm, and so may impede the progress of scientific thinking about conception.

Many feminist analysts of science use a radical feminist perspective, highlighting the impact of patriarchal ideology on scientific thought. Liberal feminist critiques of science focus on the obstacles to full involvement in scientific development by women. However, few critiques integrate issues of class, race and ethnicity, and other dimensions of difference. Ironically, while they fault scientists for failing to be aware of the sexist biases in their work and their workplace, most feminist critiques overlook the need for multidimensional critiques argued by multiracial feminist and socialist feminist critics of science (Collins 1999).

Culture, Social Structure, and Cultural Change

Egalitarianism has gradually become viewed as applicable to more and more people regardless of social categories. Patriarchy contradicts the fundamental value of egalitarianism that has long been held in American culture. In the past, equal treatment was seen as the norm for people in the same social category (for example, categories defined by race, age, ownership of property, or citizenship), but membership in groups defined as "fundamentally different" (like comparing apples and oranges) implicitly removed any obligation to treat people from different groups as equal to one another.

Despite the growing pressure for universal treatment and the integration of spheres, however, a patriarchal worldview and a patriarchal society survive with adaptations, if not intact. How can we explain this, even in the presence of assaults from the periodic waves of feminist activism? Why has it continued to be not only tolerable but also appropriate for one group to be dominated by members of another group?

There are two contrasting theoretical approaches to understanding the endurance of patriarchal ideology. One view emphasizes culture's power and its resistance to change. The other view of patriarchy's endurance emphasizes the impact of social structural arrangements on the content of culture. These standpoints are not in conflict and, indeed, combine to paint a picture of the interdependence of cultural and structural patterns. This interdependence also helps explain changes over time and the direction they take.

Sociologists emphasizing culture explore how and to what extent cultural components, such as language and systems of knowledge and belief, influence individual behavior and social patterns. For example, the questions that scientists and technologists pursue, and that funders of research underwrite, tend to serve the needs of more highly valued members of society and more highly valued activities in society. Decisions by scientists and technologists and analyses by those charged with the public's welfare have sometimes been shaped by scientifically, epidemiologically, and economically unsound biases. Thus, the problems of sufferers of rheumatoid arthritis (overwhelmingly female and elderly) have been underfunded, relative to the societal costs of this chronic disease. Similarly, the slow responses of both governmental and nongovernmental agencies to the AIDS epidemic have long been interpreted as shaped by homophobic beliefs (for example, see Altman 1987; Payne and Risch 1984).

In contrast, some analysts of contemporary society focus on how economically and politically dominant groups use their power to create, promote, and maintain a worldview to support the existing distribution of power. Using this focus, whoever makes decisions about medical funding is likely to fund illnesses from which they themselves suffer, or to which they feel vulnerable, rather than funding other illnesses. In a classical discussion of this position, Frankfort contrasted the surgically cautious approach to health problems in the male reproductive system compared to a surgically radical approach to "female" problems (1972). For example, the removal of the whole breast used to be the standard procedure when a cancer was detected in it. In response to the influence of female physicians and women's health activists, surgeons developed and increasingly used lumpectomy (removal of the tumor and a limited area around it) rather than the more extreme mastectomy.

From this view, funding priorities will be changed when underserved groups work (alone or in coalition) to show their power.

Indeed, activism among people with breast cancer has led to a disproportionately high rate of funding for this disease (relative to its impact on the population). In reaction to the matter-of-fact decision by some medical insurers to subsidize the costs of Viagra (for erectile dysfunction) activists worked to gain expanded coverage for female contraceptives, long the leading prescription category exempted from coverage by insurers. The insurers didn't need to understand the "woman's" view; they only needed to see that they would encounter significant problems, at least of public relations and perhaps of regulation, if they did not make their policies more equitable.



As more workers were needed with the expansion of production for the military and as men left workplaces for military service, nonemployed women were called on to work, and all women were urged to take on jobs viewed as "men's work." Rosie the Riveter became an important symbol used to overcome cultural beliefs about women's proper place. U.S. National Archives Exhibit Hall.

As the examples here show, hegemony includes maintaining the aspects of the culture that serve powerful interests. However, it also involves changing the cultural aspects that challenge prevailing interests. If the interests of the dominant groups change, therefore, cultural



change is likely to follow. For example, during World War II the labor force participation of married women was essential to the war effort and to the owners of companies in war-related industries. As vividly documented in the film *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, a media campaign was launched that helped bring many women into paid employment. Many others who were already employed in traditional women's jobs were ready to take advantage of the more rewarding jobs in war production. The definition of a woman's place changed quickly as economic and political incentives changed. Long-standing cultural beliefs proved to be less powerful in dictating women's behavior than might have been expected. Conversely, as the veterans returned home and were demobilized and unemployed, media campaigns about the essential full-time homemaking role for women proved inadequate to convince many women to resume their prewar activities and voluntarily make jobs available to resuming veterans. Instead, formal obstacles to women's continued participation were necessary in order to remove women from the labor pool to prevent male unemployment and anticipated social unrest. If cultural ideas of femininity had been enough to determine behavior, then the media reminders of women's "proper place" would have changed employment patterns, and the patterns of blanket firings and sex-based hirings would have been unnecessary. Likewise, curtailed government support resulted in the closing of daycare centers that had opened during the war, despite continued demand from their clientele. Thus, the usually slow rate of cultural change may indicate the resistance of powerful groups to structural change more than proving some inherent resistance to change in culture itself.

Cultural change may also come about because of changes in the distribution of power in the society. Dissatisfied members of the society may mobilize in order to gain power to bring about the cultural (and social structural) changes they seek—as the experience with the rapid change in the level of funding for breast cancer research illustrates. The impact of the Women's Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s is discussed in the chapter on politics and the legal system.

A focus on cultural causes and a focus on social structural causes are each productive in understanding social reality; many social scientists use both perspectives in their work. For example, understanding the current state of the AIDS crisis requires both recognition of the homophobia in scientific and governmental institutions (Treichler 1988) as well as recognition of the extremely well-organized gay and

lesbian response that has led to the recruitment of substantial support from non-homophobic heterosexuals (Altman 1987).

In either perspective, the power of culture is significant: a coherent view of the world and a blueprint for living enmeshes members of a culture, making it difficult to imagine alternative explanations and prescriptions, and difficult for individuals with a different vision to integrate into the social world. The dominant worldview is transmitted by vehicles ranging from explicit patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication to institutionalized belief systems communicated through organized systems of religion and knowledge (with accompanying rewards and punishments for conformity or deviance). In addition, social structural patterns implicitly reflect cultural beliefs. For example, there are recurrent differences in how officials treat male and female juvenile "status offenders," offenders whose misdeeds do not constitute legal offenses when performed by an adult. Girls have had higher rates of punishment for "incurability" than boys (Chesney-Lind 1987). Although they may not say so, officials in the juvenile justice system are acting on an ideology of gender—girls who do not behave well are bad girls, but boys who misbehave . . . well, "boys will be boys. . . ."

Science would seemingly be another source of new or modified ideas because it leads to the extension of our knowledge. Some scientists are motivated to draw away from the dominant models and assumptions of their disciplines and to investigate alternative descriptions and explanations of the phenomena they study. However, not all scientific findings are equally likely to be reported to the public. Scientific findings that do not support the complex web of beliefs that society holds about gender are less likely to be reported, or to influence the "background" in news reports, than findings that fit media professionals' ideas (Nelkin 1987). Thus, the changing knowledge related to gender is not generally diffused to members of the culture. This reflects the increasingly powerful role of the media in the process of changing cultural beliefs and knowledge.

The failure to report conclusions that undermine the justifications of patriarchy is not simply a matter of inattentiveness on the part of those who accept patriarchal descriptions of reality. The power to decide what will be reported or portrayed in the mass media belongs to the leaders of media organizations, who are rarely critical of the existing distributions of power in the society. Women who attain decision-making positions in this arena do not usually rush to remove

patriarchal patterns in their medium's messages. In fact, they rarely have sufficient power to protect themselves from criticism or from more serious punishment from superiors. Further, women who have succeeded by the "rules of the game" are likely to see them as working well enough.

Although popular ideas can shift or become more diverse without the leadership of mass media organizations, once the media incorporate a newer image of what is "normal," the more traditional segments of the audience are likely to be influenced as well. The electronic media reach an enormous audience (the basis for the occasional description of the world as a global village), so even though other kinds of organizations or groups may initiate cultural change, the changes will spread much more rapidly once the media acknowledge them. The belief that the public passively takes in media messages is, however, clearly false. This point was made in the earlier discussion of audience reactions to movies about women with unwanted pregnancies, in which viewers interpreted the messages differently and with varied skepticism (Cole and Press 1999).

Cultural change occurs at greatly differing speeds in various institutions and among different groups in our population. Men's views about women's proper roles in society have changed at different rates, reflecting the diversity of experience and location of American men. Attitudes among men toward women at home and at work are remarkably varied, both among and within some central social categories of men. For example, men with daughters are more likely to be concerned about equality of opportunity for females than are men with sons only. Furthermore, women's views about gender have changed more than men's (Warner and Steel 1999). Thus, the complexity of patterns of attitudes and attitude change requires taking a very cautious posture in predicting future cultural views of gender.

Summary

Culture, or a people's design for living, influences behaviors, opportunities, and responsibilities in situations from the everyday to the exceptional. Beliefs of a culture have strong effects on the life of the individual. Even biological differences between the sexes (such as relative average size, strength, and speed) are susceptible to the influences of culture. This is well-illustrated by the changing beliefs and

changing abilities of male and female participants in sports traditionally restricted to members of the other sex.

Ideologies of gender justify patterns of gender stratification in a particular culture. Despite our belief in the objectivity and curiosity of scientists, as members of a culture they are prone to deviate from the standards of their profession. However, many people fail to question “scientific” assumptions of gender ideology if they are framed in biological terms.

Views about gender are interwoven with beliefs about other social categories, which produces a complex ideological system rather than separate sets of rules evenly applied to all members of each sex. Primarily, the family-based household and educational institutions share in the transmission of ideology and culture. The next chapter explores these important socialization agents.

Ideologies do change, and the interdependence of culture and social structure is an important premise in the sociology of gender. In the three chapters (4–6) on social institutions, we will turn to the gendering of social life as a product of the interaction of culture and the family, the economy, and the political system.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe two or three generalizations in the chapter that you think are inaccurate. How would you propose, in each case, developing a more accurate generalization than the one here? Do you think that you and the author may have different belief systems which lead you to different generalizations?
2. Think about the ways you talk in front of old friends of yours, and with your family members, and with teachers. List some of the words you might use in one setting that you would not use in another. Now imagine that the people you are talking to are of your sex, then imagine they are of the other sex. What differences, if any, would be likely to appear in your speech?
3. Consider some ways in which people you know, of different generations or different racial, religious, national, or regional backgrounds seem different in their ideas of the capacities, responsibilities, and even the weaknesses of boys and girls, women and men.

Socialization and Social Interaction

Socialization is the process of learning the rules of the social group or culture to which we belong or hope to belong, and learning to define ourselves and others within that setting. Through socialization, we internalize, or accept as correct, the rules and definitions of the socializing group. Sometimes as part of our socialization into a subordinated group, we learn that the rules of the dominant group must be followed even when our subordinated group questions those rules. Whether or not this information is internalized, we learn that there are external pressures to conform. We come to know the rules for getting around without getting into trouble and learn to believe those rules to be unavoidable at worst or desirable at best.

These rules may be applicable to most or all situations (e.g., they define the way women should sit in public and the kinds of language that men should avoid as unmasculine), or they may apply more specifically to certain social positions. What we learn, the particular content of socialization, is influenced by cultural variations related to the region in which we live as well as the other socially significant categories to which we belong (especially racial, ethnic, and social class categories).

There is a long-standing and continuing assumption that early childhood socialization determines who one will be permanently. Although a growing literature describes people's flexibility in adapting to different meanings of gender in changing times, this contradictory assumption continues to underlie much popular and academic

discussion of what people are capable of being and doing. Its dominance is reflected in the popular explanation of adults' behaviors and attitudes by referring to "the way they were brought up." Nevertheless, we are constantly adapting to changes in our own roles and those of other people—that is, when the adaptation is relatively smooth, the ability to change goes unnoticed. Indeed, the ideology of U.S. culture, with its emphasis on economic mobility, assumes that individuals can adjust to new social rules as they move in the social structure.

This chapter outlines the processes of identity formation and learning gender, paying particular attention to the family, the school, and athletics. Reviewed here are various theoretical perspectives and their emphases in explaining the ongoing development of the individual.

The construction of a gendered identity is influenced by one's access to the means for accomplishing one or another version of femininity or masculinity. Not everyone has an equal opportunity for performing the dominant, or hegemonic, variation of gender. For example, the most highly esteemed performance of motherhood includes a woman's staying home full-time during her child's infancy, which requires economic resources that not all women have. There are other, socially recognized, ways to be a good mother, although they are not as highly regarded. Women also differ in their chances of performing these alternatives; some women have another family member to do child care. This arrangement is generally viewed as less desirable than staying with the baby, but it is more desirable than using an unrelated babysitter or taking the baby to an organized day care center. However, not all mothers have this option. Kin may be unavailable because of their location, or because of their other obligations. Fewer people grow up in large families, and thus new parents have fewer siblings and cousins to call on for help. Options are even more limited because male kin (except fathers) are very unlikely to help out in this way.

For both childhood and adult socialization, face-to-face interaction is the most influential. We will look at how social interaction, regardless of setting, may be a vehicle for reinforcing existing versions of gender or for renegotiating gendered meanings in, or even the pertinence of gender to, social roles and relationships. People change throughout their lifetimes partly because they take on new positions and leave old ones.

Even in a life that looks very stable, the individual must learn things—like how to be an experienced worker rather than a newcomer, learn to be “thirty something” instead of “young,” to be a grandparent, to be an uncle, to be a widower. People also change because of changes in their surroundings: they learn to take orders from a woman; they learn to introduce their same sex partner, rather than hiding the relationship; they learn to accept serving prepared foods rather than cooking “from scratch.”

Throughout this chapter, keep in mind the too-common tendency to think of people as “brainwashed,” rather than socialized; socialization is a complicated and incomplete process, including contradictory messages. Individual agency is visible in the decisions that people make about which messages to respect and which to ignore or react against, and in the forms such reactions take. If socialization determined everything about us, social change would not be the normal part of social life that it actually is.

Gender and Social Statuses

A **role** is the set of responsibilities, privileges, and obligations that are connected to a particular social position, or **status**. For example, the status of father has an accompanying set of expectations within a social setting. In another culture or at another time, fatherhood may be accompanied by a very different set of expectations. In the contemporary United States, most fathers are not able to veto the marriage choice of a son or daughter, but at other times and in other places, the father may have arranged that marriage soon after the child’s birth. The role has changed significantly, but we would typically have no trouble identifying the father in either culture.

Even in the same society at the same period of time, class, ethnicity, and religion are associated with differences in gender role expectations. Thus, a South Asian immigrant father in the United States may still expect to have the final say in whom his daughter will marry. Or, a poor unwed father may not marry his child’s mother because he believes a husband should provide some degree of economic security. However, by having contact with the child and providing financial assistance when possible, he can be defined as a good father. In contrast, the choice of a middle-class man to not marry the mother of

his child prevents him from being viewed as a good father, despite the growing acceptability of birth outside of marriage.

A less obvious area of gender socialization includes learning the social rules about the gender-appropriate performance of apparently gender-neutral statuses. Thus, a woman learning the executive role finds that it may be unwise to have pictures of her children on her office desk, but a man in that role learns that he may actually benefit from such a human touch. In an early life lesson, school children learn that their reactions to perceived injustices must be gender appropriate: boys should not cry, and girls should not punch. Of course, for this status there is also a large range of behavior for which acceptability is unrelated to gender. For example, no one may tell tales to the teacher, but everyone may inquire politely and rationally about the teacher's assignment. Many of the statuses we occupy have combinations of gender-specific and gender-irrelevant role expectations. In learning the roles for our positions and something about the roles connected to related positions (e.g., executives have expectations about the behavior of secretaries and of chief executive officers), we learn their gendered content.

For example, the student role for males and for females appears to have somewhat different, although overlapping, ranges of acceptable behavior (such as rules governing interrupting the teacher). Likewise, the patient role is gendered: it may be acceptable for a man patient not to consider using the services of a woman physician; but until recently, it has not been acceptable for a woman to rule out using the services of a physician because he is a man. In becoming socialized, we learn the ways in which the social world is gendered beyond the roles we ourselves perform.

Socialization includes the development of both an awareness of the socially ideal and a more sophisticated understanding of the range of the socially acceptable, as it is defined within the society or the social group in which a person is being socialized. Most of the norms a person learns specify a range of acceptable behaviors rather than one narrowly defined possibility.

Norms are influenced by the circumstances of individuals' immediate social surroundings. Thus, African American women have historically been socialized into a more flexible set of gender-appropriate norms than white women have been. Despite a strong belief in the cultural dominance of machismo in masculinity among Chicano men, research shows a flexibility also in Chicano masculini-

ties, which are strongly shaped by the opportunities and obstacles in particular individuals' social situations (Zavella 1991). In other words, we learn a range of acceptable behaviors and within that range we make choices influenced by our circumstances.

Socialization as Social Control

Being born female or male is associated with opportunities and limitations, especially regarding occupational choices and corresponding rewards of prestige, wealth, and power. If people are socialized to accept or at least to take for granted as inevitable that their biological sex will be related to life chances, then the groups with vested interests in existing arrangements do not need to use resources to defend those interests. For example, as long as people take for granted that combat roles should be filled only by men, many other arrangements that depend on the assumption that men are "obviously" tougher than women will be seen as correct and will not require defense. Combining the President's title of Commander in Chief (including controller of the button that can start a nuclear holocaust) with the practice of excluding women from combat gives sufficient informal justification to exclude women from the Presidency. Likewise, socializing women into believing that they have an inherently superior intuitive ability as well as maintaining the classical division of child care in the home means that nurturing occupations for women outside the home "make sense."

In sum, socialization serves as an efficient way to impose values and norms on the individual. Internalization of the values of a system through the socialization process is a powerful way to perpetuate that system. It is perhaps the most effective method of social control because the individual regulates and polices her or his own behavior. The resources of others need not be spent on the enforcement of social rules. This self-policing may be based on the individual's belief that these rules are appropriate or that these rules must be followed in order to avoid punishment. Although people do sometimes violate norms they believe in, presumably they are much less likely to do so than to violate rules in which they do not believe. Socialization into the acceptance of different opportunity structures, rights, rewards, and limitations for men and for women works to the benefit of those who gain from current arrangements. Although people can and do

change, it is more likely that they will go along with what they have come to take for granted.

Sex Identity and 'Doing Gender'

Sex **identity** is a person's perception that she is a girl or he is a boy, and that this femaleness or maleness is a permanent trait. The social definition and subsequent self-identification of a child as male or female is fateful for both the development of gender identity and the learning of the ways in which one's role performances must be or may be tailored to one's sex. Intersexual infants, born with both male and female genitalia, present us with an unusual but instructive example of the power of social labeling. Research on such children has found that the sex label assigned at birth and accepted during the child's early years remains a permanent self-identity. Even in the cases in which subsequent physiological development objectively identifies the child as a member of the other sex, the early childhood socialization has made an enduring impact.

The existence of intersexual individuals shows the inaccuracy of our culture's belief in the existence of two sex categories. In the dualistic thinking of our culture, reality is divided into "black" or "white." Just as there is no variation in white or in black, it is believed that there is no variation in normal women or in normal men. People who are not within the range of normal (e.g., those having an unusually small birth-size penis) are seen as abnormal. Variation in itself is considered abnormal (Fausto-Sterling 1999). Intersexuality is treated as a condition requiring surgery. The condition is diagnosed when the deviation *might* develop (when the child goes through puberty) into an inability to have standard heterosexual intercourse. Rather than considering, for example, that an infant's genitalia as it is will permit sexual pleasure, surgeons may damage the salient nerves in order to transform the infant's appearance to be unambiguously female. Thus, an unusually small penis at birth may be prevented from developing into an inadequate penis as defined by cultural ideas of proper length, rather than allowed the potential for pleasure.

In addition to those people born with genitalia that do not fit the norm for one of the two sexes, the use of genetic testing has made us aware of additional individuals who are neither clearly female nor male. When testing was initiated to insure that athletes were not

fraudulently competing against people of the other sex in world competitions, one or two athletes were discovered at each major gathering to have chromosomal sex identities different from their apparently clear-cut genital category (Kolata 1992). But the label that people live with is the one which forms their identity.

In contrast to sex identity, people's **gender identity**, their ideas of the relation between their sex and its social meanings (how they establish that they are *masculine* or *feminine*) does change after early childhood. Nonetheless, all theoretical models of gender development emphasize the importance of the earliest social environment. Certainly, there are some patterned differences in behavior between the sexes, although the extent of these differences is popularly exaggerated and flaws in research methodologies make it difficult to draw firm conclusions. As we saw in the last chapter, the beliefs of scientists cannot easily be separated from the fundamental assumptions of their culture, complicating the study of sex and gender. Increasing challenges to assumptions about sex and gender from within science have led to more rigorously conducted research and increasing recognition of the historical exaggeration of sex differences.

Despite the popularity of biological explanations (see Angier 1999), social definitions of femininities and masculinities are important in creating differences, and in shaping their further development (Brody 1999). In other words, differences between the sexes are actually produced by differences in the socially shaped experiences of people, from birth.

Although we are socialized throughout our lives, the early years have the most enduring impact. Gender learning has analytically distinct products: the formation of a gender identity; the learning of sex-specific roles (e.g., mother) and gendered versions of otherwise sex-neutral roles (e.g., student); and the learning of how being a member of the culture itself is gendered. We must learn broadly applicable rules, pertinent regardless of the particular roles that we might perform—in order to talk, manage our appearance, and in other ways signify to others that we are appropriately feminine or masculine. West and Zimmerman (1987) say one is "**doing gender**" when one's behavior follows a fundamentally applicable set of rules for acting like a male or a female.

Racial-ethnic groups and social classes vary somewhat in the content of the rule-set. For example, Latinas who are not very thin are defined as feminine, while white women of the same shape tend to

be defined as fat (Haubegger 1994). In addition to differences in defining how to do gender, groups vary in the extent to which they see gender as related at all to how a particular role should be performed. Among white students, speaking up in class is sometimes seen as less acceptable for girls than for boys. Gender appears to be related differently to speaking up among African American students (Grant 1994).

Significant Others

Sex identity, the gender-specific content of particular roles, and the more globally applicable rules of being like members of one's sex category are taught by the people who surround the child and with whom the child interacts regularly rather than by some mysterious dominant culture or subculture. In addition to being told about gender, the child actively observes **significant others** and draws conclusions about the rules governing gender. Significant others are people with whom the child has frequent and regular contact, who have control over rewards and punishments for the child, and who have some image of what the child should become. Parents and other household members are the first significant others in a child's life. As we age, other people—such as friends, teachers, and grandparents—may become important socialization agents. Recently, increased attention has been directed to the power of peer influence, even before adolescence (Harris 1998).

Significant others affect children's development, including their gender development, in several ways. As people the child admires and probably loves, these significant figures are models of behavior that the child will want to emulate. This imitation, or modeling, appears to be intrinsically rewarding for the child. Perceiving oneself as being like an admired person is a desired end in itself. For example, children talk to themselves in imitation of parents, not expecting to be overheard and rewarded but simply because they enjoy being like their parents. Of course, this emulation implies a great deal of power for the parent, both through the rewarding and punishing of the child's behavior and through the likelihood that his or her own behavior will be imitated.

Table 3.1
Toys That Teach

In 2000, the Mattel Corporation's products included two computers. The Barbie model was designed for use by girls, and the Hot Wheels model was designed for use by boys. These models were not, however, simply different in appearance. They had important differences in the software that they provided.

Only Barbie has:	Only Hot Wheels has:	Both models have:
Fashion Designer	A human anatomy & 3D visualization program	An encyclopedia
Detective Barbie	Cluefinders Math 9-12	A 3D World Atlas
Miscellaneous Barbie programs*	Compton's Complete Reference Collection	Math Workshop
	Kid Pix Studio	Typing Tutorial
	Logical Journey of the Zoombinis (a thinking game)	National Geographic: The 90s
		Writing and Creativity Center

*According to Mattel, the popular Barbie software did not leave enough space on the Barbie model computer to include all the educational software on the Hot Wheels model.

Headlam, Bruce. "Barbie PC: Fashion Over Logic." 2000. *The New York Times* January 20, G4.

The attitudes and behaviors of significant others will influence the particular messages about gender that are communicated, including what gender involves and how dominant it is in determining desirable behavior. Beyond the ways in which the significant others treat the child, the child will also draw conclusions about gender-related rules based on observing the significant others themselves. Thus, a girl whose mother never does any household repairs (like fixing a leaky faucet or a loose doorknob) is unlikely to take a shop or woodworking class, even if the mother suggests she do so. On the other hand, if her grandfather encourages her to be his helper as he does repairs himself, she may develop an interest in fixing things and choose the course herself.

In an early and important article (1963), Maccoby explicated the logic of the socialization process and the eventual development of

observed differences in the cognitive and personality traits of females and males. First, adults and others note an infant or child's sex. Based on the expectations they have for children of that sex, they may act differently toward boys and girls, creating different limits, expectations, and situations leading to rewards or punishments. For example, researchers have found a tendency of mothers to let boy babies crawl or walk further away than they let girl babies before calling or bringing them closer by. This subtle but persistent difference in treatment is linked to boys developing a more adventurous, risk-taking style than girls, which is popularly seen as an inborn sex difference.

Thus, children gradually respond to the structuring of their experiences by developing certain potentials and inhibiting the expression of other abilities. A child may seek to overcome a deficiency (such as muscular weakness in a boy) because others define it as gender-inappropriate. If the same deficiency is defined as gender-appropriate, the child may make no effort to overcome it and in fact may be proud of it. Girls may use their supposed weakness as an excuse for boys to help them with heavy loads. On the other hand, potentials that are seen as sex-inappropriate, such as a good throwing arm in a girl and physical grace in a boy, may not be developed and may eventually be lost.

Therefore, it is not innate differences but differences in the social treatment of females and males that eventually affect the actual distribution of traits between populations of males and females. These traits are then assumed to be natural sex differences. If they are viewed as natural, then most people believe there is no reason to try to change social arrangements to facilitate broadening opportunities for the sexes.

In research based primarily on whites, fathers and grandfathers have consistently been more interested in children's behaving in a gender-appropriate manner than mothers and grandmothers have been. Further, men tend to define *gender appropriate* more traditionally than women do (Brody 1999; Lamb et al. 1986). Some recent evidence suggests, however, that fathers of girls do change their attitudes, becoming more egalitarian. In contrast, fathers with sons only have not shown this shift (Warner and Steel 1999). The researchers suggest that a man with a daughter becomes increasingly aware of possible limits on her life related to sexism. He shifts his views to be in line with his desires for her opportunities. In contrast, the man with sons lacks that motivation to change his views. He may actually

become concerned about the possibility of decreasing opportunities for his son(s), fearing that expanded rights for females will narrow males' chances.

Consistent with the more egalitarian traditions among African American couples (with major responsibilities typically shared more equitably than in white couples), some researchers have found less interest in traditional gender distinctions among African American fathers and grandfathers in U.S. society (Sprague and Hill 1999). Likewise, members of other ethnic groups are likely to differ from one another in socialization experiences related to gender. The longer that members (or generations) of a family live in the United States, however, the fewer aspects of patterns from their previous culture will dominate and the more they will follow dominant U.S. patterns. Still, variations by religion, region, and social class will remain important dimensions of difference in socialization.

Social explanations do not easily outweigh the popularity of biological explanations of gendered behavior. Returning to the example of the different amount of freedom that mothers allow their infants, proponents of biological explanations might assert, for example, that mothers are instinctively more protective of girls than boys. There is no reason for conjuring "instinct," though, when it is simpler to explain mothers' treatments of their babies as their imitation of how they themselves were treated and how they saw same- and other-sexed children treated. In other words, many who prefer biological explanations resist evidence of the importance of social influence. Fundamentally, the biological approach is most challenged by the wide variety of gendered meanings and experiences among different societies, cultures, and even among people positioned differently in the social intersections formed by social class, racial-ethnic identities, and other social positions within the same country.

Models of Individual Development

Several theoretical models of individual development (focusing on personality, morality, and cognition) have been applied to the development of gender-related feelings and behaviors. Research to test these theoretical approaches has resulted in mixed findings. Recent work suggests that the most fruitful model for individual development will integrate aspects of each of the existing models.

The **object relations** approach to gender socialization has been influential among some social psychologists and sociologists (Chodorow 1978), although it has not received the empirical support that its popularity suggests (see, for example, Jackson 1989). Chodorow described women as having an overdeveloped capacity to connect empathically with others (a greater sense of relatedness) while men have an underdeveloped capacity for relatedness. Integrating a Freudian approach to personality formation with a sociological analysis, Chodorow concluded that this difference stems from the cultural assignment of child rearing to women. Boys, in this perspective, separate themselves from their mothers more fully than girls do; consequently, boys mature with less ability to be nurturant themselves. Child-rearing responsibility is again assigned to women in the next generation; previous patterns of mothering reproduce themselves.

The mothering that Chodorow analyzes is not a universally occurring role definition but a characteristic that is associated to a time-, class-, and race- bound social category (as many critics have pointed out). For Chodorow, the small-group dynamic of the immediate family has more of an impact on how the next generation arranges child care than do social structural factors, such as wage discrimination and social limitations on individual reproductive control. In contrast, most sociologists consider larger-scale social forces to have a more significant role in shaping personal behavior (Lorber 1981). Nonetheless, within its limits, the object relations perspective provides a useful way to look at the small-group dynamics of the child and her or his primary caretakers, contributing to understanding the behavior of both (Brody 1999).

Two very different models of child development add important dimensions to current thinking about gender development. According to the **cognitive-developmental** model (see Kohlberg 1966), children learn their own genders in much the same way that they learn the identity of physical objects, and they recognize that these physical objects retain identity over time. In this model, children learn the gendered versions of their roles because they find it intrinsically rewarding to do whatever may conform to the *sex identity* they have already acquired. Applying this model to a hypothetical example from early childhood will highlight the basic perspective of the model. If a small boy is dressed as a football player for Halloween, he will probably encounter many smiling adults who comment on what a big

boy he is, what a little “man” he is, or perhaps how strong he looks (if he is wearing pads). According to the cognitive-developmental model, the boy knows he is a boy, and he is pleased that his costume is appropriate to being a boy. He is sure of his gender identity and is learning that he is supposed to be strong.

In contrast, the **social learning** model (Mischel 1970) emphasizes that children enjoy being rewarded. If they find that they are rewarded for doing boy (or girl) things, they will come to want to be boys (or girls) and will identify themselves as such. In other words, the identity emerges from role-playing experiences. Within the social learning model, the hypothetical episode of the Halloween costume is important to the child because boyish behavior is being rewarded. The rewards of gender-appropriate performance help to continue the boy’s self-identification as male. If the boy had chosen to dress up as a witch, his failure to present himself boyishly might be punished by the ridicule of other children. Punishments as well as rewards have an impact on social learning.

Generally, the social learning approach sees gender-identity formation as a result of rewards for behavior appropriate to one’s gendered roles. The cognitive-developmental model sees gender-identity learning as a more straightforward acquisition of information about the world; *learning how roles are gendered* then follows and is rewarding to the child because it confirms the child’s understanding of his or her gender identity. The two approaches also differ in how active the child is in the learning process. In the cognitive developmental model the child is actively engaged in making sense out of her or his surroundings.

The most promising approach to gender development is **schema theory**. It builds upon aspects of the cognitive-developmental and social learning models. It developed, in part, as a response to the mixed findings of research testing those models. Schema theory focuses “on the cognitive mechanisms that organize, transform, and construct the child’s world” (Albert and Porter 1988, 191). In this theory, the child is a more active participant in development than in the social learning model, and is more influenced by the particular characteristics of the social environment than in the cognitive-developmental model. The two schema that the child develops (one about each gender) are normally evolving, open to change as the child is exposed to different or more complex aspects of reality. Proponents of this theory hypothesize that the schema for one’s own gender is more complex and more

detailed than the schema for the other gender. Research grounded in schema theory has also produced mixed findings that encourage further study.

Schema theory has two especially promising aspects. First, it provides a simple framework with which to explain changes in behavior and attitudes over the life course. Second, it is compatible with a view of individual development in which gender is one of several social categories that *in combination* define socially desired individual development. Both of these features are crucial to a complete understanding of human development.

Schools and Socialization

The schema approach views children as active seekers of coherent explanations of their social worlds. As they expand their experiences beyond the home, they are faced with a widening range of gendered role performances and ideas about gender. Teachers and friends reward or punish behavior that conforms to or deviates from their own definitions of gendered roles. Children have agency and witness varied gender performances, which they may imitate. However, the availability of models is also limited in schools, by the sex segregation of those in educational occupations and the sex segregation of pupils in formal and informal facets of the daily schedule.

Teachers communicate the assumption, in many ways, that sex is a relevant basis for classifying people. For example, when holiday grab bags are planned, each child may be instructed to bring a gift that is appropriate for a child of the same sex. Thus, the world of play is officially segregated into things for girls and things for boys. More importantly, attitude studies continue to report that many teachers tend to define some behaviors (such as passivity) as problems if exhibited by boys but not if exhibited by girls. Other behaviors (such as physical aggression) are more likely to be defined as problems if they are shown by girls than if shown by boys. In other words, boys are normal if they are independent, even to the point of aggressiveness. Girls are normal if they are dependent. For almost thirty years, research has documented teachers' (of both sexes) tendency to direct more attention to boys than girls. The sex difference in teachers' attention is less pronounced for students of color than for white students: white boys lead in teacher attention (which is not always positive). Although

these patterns are now less extreme, research confirms that they persist (Sadker and Sadker 1994).

Teachers often encourage sex segregation through formal and informal practices. From the earliest days of school, many teachers and school officials structure routines in ways that imply that boys and girls are fundamentally different (see Thorne 1993). Despite official integration, play areas in day care centers, nursery schools, and kindergartens are usually informally sex segregated. And, sex integration is not always the official rule. Teachers who would never ask white children to line up on one side of the room and children of color on the other side see lining up by boys and girls as entirely appropriate. Some New York City schools still require students to eat lunch at sex-segregated tables (Ellis 1999). In the 1990s, the principal of a suburban middle school punished *all* fourth grade boys because *many* fourth grade boys had misbehaved at a school event. He would never punish all members of a racial-ethnic group because of the misbehavior of *many* members of that group. Differences in treatment based on race tend to be more subtle and less overtly defended than differences based on sex.

Some children bring traditional ideas of gendered play to school and teachers don't usually intercede to suggest freer choice. Although the tendency to sex segregate varies with children's ages, peer groups usually consist of either all boys or all girls, rather than mixed-sex. However, research has shown that children will interact in mixed-sex groups that adults create, even if children do not typically choose such groups themselves (Thorne 1993).

Teachers encourage gender distinctions in both subtle and obvious ways. Teachers' expectations that children prefer same-sex contact probably focuses their attention on children's expression of that preference and leads them to ignore or be less attuned to other messages from other children. When authorities accept or even initiate sex segregation, they limit the opportunities children have for choosing activities, playmates, or work groups. More basically, they endorse sex as a basis of differential treatment and expectations of girls and boys.

Meanwhile, gender-traditional messages from peers complicate the worldview of children raised by parents with feminist beliefs. In a study of families headed by feminist couples, their children generally held on to the abstract values of their parents' ideology. However, they formed a variety of perspectives that accepted as real the prac-

tices and values encountered among their peers (Risman 1998). The peer group influence usually overwhelms the parental influence in shaping everyday behavior, although the family's egalitarian values remain dominant. Whether based on an internalization of the peers' patterns, or more pragmatically based (i.e., "going along to get along"), as children's worlds expand their parents are often surprised to see children adopt behaviors and attitudes different from those in the home. It is not unusual for children who play in sex-integrated groups in their neighborhood to shun their other-sex playmates at school. This, of course, perpetuates teachers' beliefs in children's preference for same-sex interaction.

Gender and Athletics

Athletics in school has been an important site of individual development. In the early years of school, children themselves structure informal activities during recess. Teachers generally intervene only in the case of violent disagreements. On the playground, boys dominate the physical territory, sometimes taking over the monkey bars, the slides, and portable equipment (for example, the soccer ball).

The domination of this arena by the most aggressive children leads to the enforcement of their world view, including their notions of gender. Children (more often girls than boys) do venture into areas or groups identified with the other sex. Even when some boys are open to girls' approach, the dominant boys are likely to be intolerant of mixed-sex games. Precisely because these boys usually excel physically, they are likely to embrace a version of masculinity based on physical prowess. Thus, the real or potential ability of girls to be competitive at the boys' level threatens their masculinity. Most other boys usually go along with the enforcement of all-male play (McGuffey and Rich 1999).

Sports become more organized and formalized as children get older. Teams are formed in classes and as school sponsored extra-curricular activities. Inequities continue in terms of which sports are open to each sex, the quality of coaching, equipment, uniforms, and physical facilities assigned to boys and to girls teams. Nonetheless, girls' and women's participation in sports have radically expanded from their levels before the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement.

An important change in athletic opportunities for female students came with the 1972 passage of the Higher Education Act. Title IX is the section of that act that orders equal access to sports in public schools and colleges. This section of the law has been one of the most energetically disputed pieces of legislation concerning girls' lives. Both cultural and social structural traditions are threatened by Title IX. It threatens traditional beliefs in the relative weakness and passivity of females by assuming they would and could take advantage of equal opportunities in sports. Although most of those beliefs have become outdated, the social structural obstacles are still significant, because of this measure's impact on schools' and colleges' budgets. While some additional monies might be given to girls' and women's teams, the athletic budgets are not doubled; that is, to achieve equity, some spending on men's teams must be reduced. Athletic programs and their achievements may affect a school's financial support from alumni and legislators. Leaders of schools are reluctant to cut budgets of teams that bring in money (in some cases from contracts with sports broadcasters). This combines with most administrators' continued belief that women's sports do not have many fans. In fact, most institutions' men's teams lose money (Zimbalist 2000). And the enormous positive reaction to the U.S. women's soccer team in the 1999 World Cup contest made sports enthusiasts rethink the potential audience for women's sports.

The ways in which athletics and opportunities for participation in them are gendered have serious implications for the development of both females and males. The involvement of pre-adolescent and adolescent girls in organized sports contributes to the development of a strong, positive self-image. Girls who participate in sports tend to do well academically. Thus, the goal of equitable athletic opportunities for girls has broader consequences than does sports achievement alone.

Cultural ideals of men's and women's physiques have changed in ways that value an increasingly exaggerated athletic appearance (Pope et al. 1999). While participation in athletics can be a positive experience for females and males, the struggle to create and maintain a body meeting contemporary standards of the star athlete may actually undermine a person's health. Rather than being empowered by athleticism, current fashions may involve dietary, exercise, and even pharmaceutical regimens that undermine the person's well-being (Dworkin and Messner 1999). An analysis of the changing propor-

tions of action figures found that if a human man were 6 feet tall and had the proportions of the 1964 G.I. Joe, the man's biceps would be 12.2 inches in circumference. By 1998, the biceps of the G.I. Joe Extreme toy had become grossly enlarged. A 6 foot tall man with G.I. Joe Extreme's proportions would have biceps 26.8 inches in circumference! In contrast, even home-run king Mark McGwire (6'5" tall) actually had biceps of only 20.0 inches in circumference (*The New York Times* May 30, 1999).

Social class and racial-ethnic positions have a major impact on the transition from participating in athletics in the school years to thinking about pursuing athletics as a career. The decisions made by successful amateur athletes both reflect and influence young men's shaping of their masculine self-definitions (Messner 1989). Athletic prowess is a significant source of masculine identity throughout the culture, but some men abandon it as their primary source of masculinity sooner than others. Differences in pursuing or abandoning athletic achievement reflects the tremendous variation in opportunities for establishing masculinity, rather than any difference in cultural values or beliefs about masculinity. Good athletes whose social class backgrounds provide other reliable opportunities for economic success were more likely than players from lower-status backgrounds to let go of their athletic sources of self-esteem while they were still performing well.

Sexual Development

Sex identity is the sense that one is male or female; gender identity is the notion that one is feminine or masculine; **sexual identity** is the sense that one is homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. One's sexual identity is different from one's gender identity. A heterosexual man may *do gender* in an androgynous way, that is he may combine some behaviors culturally defined as feminine with some defined as masculine; a lesbian may behave in a way totally consistent with traditional notions of femininity (except the sex of her sexual partners). In our culture, however, this still surprises people. When a particularly masculine male celebrity, or feminine female celebrity is identified as having a same sex partner, he or she is illustrating the difference between these two dimensions, sexual identity and gender identity (Connell 1999).

In recent decades, homosexual relationships have become increasingly visible and acceptable, with a growing number of households with gay or lesbian couples, and sometimes their children. There is a continuing and dynamic debate about the causes of homosexual preferences, which is interrelated with views about the acceptability of homosexual unions. Although it has become a less popular view, some individuals continue to classify homosexuality as an illness or a perversion, or both. In 1998, Trent Lott, majority leader of the U.S. Senate, compared homosexuality to kleptomania. The reaction to his comments showed that this is a particularly controversial notion.

A more scientific rather than moralistic view argues that there is a genetic predisposition to homosexuality, even that one's sexual preference is "hard-wired," or determined by some neurological structures in the brain itself (see Zicklin 1997 for a critique of this research). In contrast, others maintain that sexual preference is not a fixed characteristic, but is a product of social experiences and can be influenced by changing circumstances. For example, prisoners may be committed to same sex partners while incarcerated, but revert to heterosexual relationships on return to the outside world. Emotional attachment to an individual at a particular point in one's life may make that person a sexually attractive object, even if he or she is of the sex one has typically not seen as sexually interesting. This more fluid view of sexual preference is less popular than biological and essentialist models. However, it is supported by research (Zicklin 1997; Blumstein and Schwartz 1990).

Learning a sexual or erotic role depends on extensive social inputs into what appears to be a biological fact of life. In our culture, learning to think of oneself as a sexual being, learning how to feel sexual (what "turns you on" sexually), and learning how to interact sexually have been very different developmental experiences for males and females. Being a sexual actor requires knowledge of the physical aspects of sexual behavior, but it also requires familiarity with the social scripts. Like theatrical scripts, social scripts provide the person with the acceptable lines to say to others and with the cues that tell the person when the time for those lines is at hand. The most basic and pervasive distinction between boys' and girls' socialization into sexuality traditionally has been the different pattern for learning physical and social elements of the role. Girls tend to learn the social scripts of their sexual behaviors before they actually feel physically

“sexual.” Conversely, boys learn about the physical aspects of sexual behavior, explicit descriptions of it, and large vocabularies of applicable terms even before they know how to have a conversation with a girl. Girls learn how to interact in situations that are either overtly or covertly sexual quite early (relative to boys). For example, small girls learn to sit with their legs together before they have any idea of the implications of having one’s legs spread apart for sexual activity. Girls learn how to flirt long before they have any notion of where flirting might lead and how that might feel. With the greater exposure to sexual materials in the last few decades, some decrease has been noted in the difference in girls’ and boys’ familiarity with the social and physical aspects of sexual interactions.

Even in adulthood, people’s sexual development continues. For example, women’s increased participation in sex-integrated environments outside the family has increased their sexual activity outside the family (Blumstein and Schwartz 1990). This results from the greater opportunity to form emotional relationships that, for most U.S. women, precede the experience of sexual desire. Thus, women’s lives have provided them with more chances to develop a relationship in which they feel sexual, and technological and legal changes have freed women from the fear of pregnancy that might otherwise have served to limit their behavior.

Gender and Other Social Categories

Judging from their omissions, people’s discussions of socialization often assume that the experiences comprising gender socialization are uniquely ubiquitous, homogeneous, and determinative. This ignores the much greater complexity of reality, in which memberships in other categories (e.g., racial, ethnic, or income groups; urban, suburban, or rural residence of origin; religion; and birth order) are also associated with expectations for behavior. These aspects of an individual’s place in the social world combine to produce for the individual a particular version of gender identity and particular shapes of gendered performance.

On examination, the one-dimensional approach—explaining an individual’s behavior solely on the basis of the social implications of one’s sex—is nonsensical. For example, consider how a person learning the role of motorist learns to behave when stopped by a traffic

officer. Presumably sharing the goal of avoiding "trouble," individual strategies, I hypothesize, differ by one's position in the social world. Thus, men of color learn to relate to traffic officers differently than women of color do, and these women presumably adopt different strategies than white women. For white men, learning to relate to traffic officers is probably heavily influenced by social class position (a factor not completely irrelevant to members of other categories) and age. Of course, all these variations are multiplied, if we move from the traditional expectation that the officer is a white male. The motorist would change strategy if stopped by an African American woman, for example. Strategies believed to work with a white policeman (e.g., deferential behavior by members of subordinate social categories) may be rejected and others developed. Drivers who react to any officer by being cooperative and quiet, or by offering a bribe, regardless of the officer's race and sex, are illustrating their assumption that the officer's occupational status is crucial. This illustrates people's ability to change throughout life. Those who do not immediately "change with the times" are likely to learn quickly that they are out of step if they indicate to the officer that he or she violates their notion of what an officer's race and sex should be.

One study of a small group of economically successful Chinese American men illustrates a variety of masculinities (Chen 1999). Because of stereotypes of Chinese American men, such as their supposed lack of aggressiveness, these men could not fulfill the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. Rather than passively accepting some demasculinized identity, each man actively responded to this situation. Some tried to challenge their marginal position by *excelling* within the criteria of hegemonic masculinity itself. Other men tried to excel in other ways, in the hope that their excellence would *deflect* attention from their shortcomings within the dominant version of masculinity. Some of the men Chen interviewed, however, simply *denied* the ways in which their lives differed from the dominant version among white American men; they accepted the hegemonic definition of masculinity, and ignored the ways in which they could not satisfy that definition. In a theoretical discussion of these findings, Chen emphasized that cultural domination requires the cooperation of subordinated individuals. In order to avoid dealing with repudiation, or rebellion against their domination, powerful groups may accept the adaptations of marginalized men as achievements of masculinity. Regardless of the version of masculinity that they develop,

however, marginalized men must assert dominance over the women within their racial-ethnic or class groups to win this acceptance.

One man in Chen's study did respond to the dominant definition of masculinity by rejecting it, and therefore rejecting the judgment that his achievement of masculinity was merely marginal. This man is gay, and so is multiply marginal. In a related account about bisexual people's experience of marginality among both heterosexual and homosexual groups, Rust (1996) found that some individuals, whose families were racially or ethnically mixed, or whose identity was otherwise experienced as marginal, were actually especially comfortable in the marginality of their sexual identity. Social change may be more likely to come from people who cannot successfully adapt to the dominant definitions of gender, and so have less to lose when they stop trying to.

Finally, in explaining variations in teenage boys' delinquent and criminal behaviors, Messerschmidt (1993) used an intersectionist, multiracial feminist perspective. Looking at the present and future opportunities of teenage boys helps make sense of their different choices of victims, sites for acting out, and modes of criminality. All boys trying to establish masculinity must cope with the emasculating character of the high school environment. Those who expect ultimately to achieve hegemonic masculinity will restrict their misbehavior to nonschool settings, to safeguard their academic and hence their occupational futures. Those who believe they will always be outsiders have less reason to behave in school.

Gender Through the Life Course

People adapt to changing times and changing situations. Currently, fathers with greater-than-average participation in housework and child care tasks develop self-images as more nurturant and competent parents as they spend more time in these activities (Coltrane 1996). Mothers who expected to stay home to raise their children went back to school or work when the rate of inflation in the 1970s made their earnings essential.

Although more children than ever are brought up in families espousing nontraditional gender ideologies, and schools increasingly integrate their courses, we still find many students making traditional major and career choices. Despite women's rapid increase in the pur-

suit of higher education, including graduate degrees, women continue to be underrepresented in mathematics, physical sciences, and engineering. Although there is a large defection among both men and

Table 3.2
*Bachelor's Degrees Awarded in the United States
1995-1996, in Selected Fields*

Women and men often specialize in different areas in college. Information grouped in broad categories masks differences within particular fields. For example, while the social sciences and history have roughly equal sex representation, economics and sociology do not.

Percentage of degrees awarded to:		
Selected Fields of Study	Men	Women
Architecture and related programs	64%	36%
Biological sciences and life sciences	47%	53%
Computer and information sciences	72%	28%
Education	25%	75%
Engineering	82%	28%
English language and literature	34%	66%
Foreign languages	30%	70%
Home economics, vocational home ec.	12%	88%
Mathematics	54%	46%
Psychology	27%	73%
Social sciences and history	52%	48%
Economics	70%	30%
Sociology	32%	68%

Source: *Digest of Educational Statistics 1998*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington: Government Printing Office. Table 253 "Bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees conferred by institutions of higher education, by sex of student and field of study: 1995-1996."

women who start college with a plan to major in one of these traditionally male-dominated fields, men are more likely to persist in such majors than are women of similar ability levels (Parelius 1991). Thus, women and men are influenced by somewhat different sets of factors in choosing their major and in changing it (Frehill 1997).

Comparing the academic and social effects of attendance at same-sex and mixed-sex schools, Miller-Bernal (2000) analyzed the influence of one's immediate social environment on individual changes after early childhood. Research conducted in the United States and abroad, at both secondary and college levels, suggests that the sex composition of a school affects the outcome of the educational experience. Although some criticize the single-sex school as an unrealistic environment, the absence of males benefits many female students, including academic achievement and career orientation. Several hypotheses have been explored to explain this conclusion. For example, single-sex education may provide a social space in which people feel less pressure to "do gender," enabling them to devote more attention to the subject at hand. Although same-sex institutions are currently uncommon in the United States, they provide an important picture of the place of social arrangements on socialization and the potential for individual change after childhood (Tidball et al. 1999). Such schools help identify changes that could be made to mixed-sex environments to promote less sexist socialization experiences and outcomes. For example, women students profit from opportunities for leadership as well as standard practices that insure coverage of events featuring women participants and women's organizations in the student press.

People's ideas about gendered roles often change when they are established in households of their own, with family responsibilities and economic conditions beyond their control. Sometimes their practices (that is, the way they lead their daily lives) are more flexible than their stated ideologies, which may be slower to change. In research on Chicana cannery workers and industrial workers, Zavella (1991) described how the importance of a wife's earnings may be recognized or denied by her husband. Likewise, because of the work-related demands on a wife, a husband's participation in household and child-rearing tasks may be adjusted. Therefore, changes in behaviors may lead to changes in beliefs. Using a multiracial perspective, Zavella's research illustrates that ideological and occupational variations are significant within a single racial-ethnic group.

Research about men in a federally-funded program for “deadbeat dads” provides another view of the possibilities of socialization in adulthood (Johnson et al. 1999). Unlike most stereotypes of noncustodial fathers who fail to pay child support, this program aimed at men who were economically unable to make payments. With few occupational opportunities, high rates of both unemployment and underemployment, these men were often unable to maintain their own household, rather than living luxuriously at the expense of their children as per the stereotype. The program aimed to help its participants find stable and relatively better paid work. The reality of the communities in which these men live is one of poor prospects, but some possibility.

However, because individuals’ perceptions of their opportunities have a real impact on their motivation and commitment to taking initiative, the program worked both to improve the men’s chances for favorable employment and to change the men’s perceptions of their opportunities and their parental roles. By the end of the experiment, the views of many participants about their roles as fathers had changed.

Finally, a significant area in which to observe changing gender through the life cycle is in the second wave of feminism and how it influenced the attitudes and behaviors of women and men whose socialization began before 1970. For example, people born in 1946 (the beginning of the baby boom) went to schools with some sex-segregated curricula (e.g., boys could not take cooking; girls could not take shop) and with vocational testing that scored the same set of answers as indicating the potential for one occupation if the student was female and a different occupation if the student was male. Family arrangements were also very different in the 1950s and 1960s than they are today, yet people who are in their early fifties now were raised in those homes. People’s attitudes have changed in response to changing cultural content, and as their own children have served to socialize them to newer expectations for the ways in which behavior and role performances are gendered (or are less gendered). It may be more common for us to notice people when they say or do something old-fashioned than to realize the wide range of ways that their daily lives differ from what they were raised to expect. The most immediate source of information about the extent of these changes is available to any student who knows someone over fifty. Compose a list of questions you may have about how things were done, and have a con-

versation with someone raised before the Women's Liberation Movement started to have an impact!

Social Interaction and the Negotiation of Gender

Through our everyday social interaction—at work, school, on the street, or in the supermarket—we are acting on the basic rules we have learned, or we are reacting to the rules that the people with whom we are interacting are implicitly putting forward.

For example, someone has to take notes at a meeting. Who will take the notes? One who has never taken notes at a meeting probably doesn't think of doing so. On the other hand, if one has often ended up taking notes at meetings, she may volunteer. She might be happy to take it on, as something she is experienced in and therefore good at, which provides her with a way to excel in the club. But if no one offers to do this job, and the meeting seems momentarily stalled, another person may speak up: "I'm tired of you guys always thinking that some girl is going to take the notes. I'm not going to do it, why don't you do it for a change?" Something will happen: another female member of the group may well speak up and volunteer to do it, or a male may deny any sexism in the group and volunteer himself. Regardless of the outcome, the speaker has "rocked the boat," has challenged what is taken for granted. The next time the group needs a note-taker, this episode will influence what happens. One outcome may be that a man will volunteer to take notes. Or the woman who complained may be treated coldly by others, who refer to her as a "feminazi" behind her back.

In other words, when the rules we take for granted are followed without discussion, we assume that adulthood is simply about following the rules we previously learned. But when people confront those rules, or follow other rules (let's say that the chair of the meeting had started with: "Let's rotate the note taking; today we'll start with the person to my left"), we learn that rules can be renegotiated. Our previous socialization is not all-determining.

This micro-social level of small group or face-to-face interaction is a significant factor in maintaining or changing the meanings of gender. It is the way that the changes "out there" get translated (or not) into changes that "really" happen. Nonetheless, people are not entirely free to interact and develop some consensus about gendering inde-

pendent of larger social patterns. Both the confidence to speak up in the meeting and challenge a pattern that is perceived as unfair as well as the authority to impose a new system for task assignments illustrate that the initiative to change existing arrangements often comes from relatively powerful people. As long as relatively powerful positions are held by men, women may feel they must conform to unfair arrangements in their work groups. As Martin and Collinson point out (1999), members of organizations actively construct and reconstruct gender in their organizations. When women are relatively powerless in those organizations, they are less able to affect the organization's formal and informal definitions of gender. Even in an "alternative" organization (that is, one with a self-definition as critical of mainstream social arrangements or goals), members reproduced traditionally gendered patterns of unequal respect and resources (Kleinman 1996).

For example, if a couple with a child in kindergarten decides that the father will volunteer to be class parent, the school official setting up the network of class mothers may not go along with that decision. Indeed, as long as the call for volunteers names the job "class mother," that couple is unlikely to have responded! As long as the larger organizations of which we are a part do not change their basic rules of gendering, micro-social redefinitions of the place of gender will not matter. However, if one or two or three fathers volunteer, the official title of the job may be changed for the future. Or, it may be changed that year and revert back to the gendered title in the future. In other words, the negotiation of change is ongoing. Eventually, after several consecutive years of calling the job "class parent," it would be hard to revert to the "class mother" language. And, as I pointed out in the chapter on culture, the gender neutrality of the word will be irrelevant if men who volunteer are treated as inappropriate for volunteering.

Finally, different patterns may form from one school to another. For example, while some schools practiced sex segregation in the lunch room, others did not (Ellis 1999). This illustrates how the middle level of social life can reinforce or interfere with small group, or micro-level, arrangements. With cooperation among individuals and small groups who want to change the organizations they are part of, the middle level may change. Otherwise, there will be relatively little influence from the micro- to the middle level. The impact of the macro-level (such as society) is often mediated by the middle level of social structures in its influence on our daily lives. It is often the mid-

dle level that has the critical impact on small groups' ability to work out and live with arrangements that are gender neutral (see Risman 1998).

Summary

Socialization is the process by which the content of culture is taken into the individual. Rules are learned and internalized pertaining to particular statuses that the person occupies and to people with whom the person interacts in particular contexts. More generally applicable rules of behavior are also learned—individuals learn to “do gender,” or to present themselves to all and sundry as real men or women. Socialization is a very efficient form of social control because rather than being externally monitored, each person is self-policing. We continually encounter assumptions about differences between the sexes in personality characteristics, intellectual abilities, and behavior patterns. The extent of these differences is increasingly called into question by careful research; simultaneously, the differences that are discovered are increasingly viewed as products of social treatment rather than innate characteristics (Brody 1999).

People learn how to act “appropriately,” but they usually learn a range of acceptable behaviors from which they actively choose: they learn what is appropriate but also often realize that they are unable to conform because of other aspects of their lives. For example, men learn that masculinity includes economic self-sufficiency; however, if jobs pay too little to support a family, men look for other ways to be masculine. The concept of socialization is an important component for understanding what people do, but it cannot be used as the ultimate explanation for what people do or do not do. Social structure, to which we turn in the following chapters, combines with socialization to explain more about the gendering of people's lives.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the major theoretical approaches to gender development, noting what they have in common and where and how they differ. How does each help us understand the process, and what are the weaknesses of each?

2. Imagine that you have just started to teach the first grade. What kinds of arrangements (rules, physical lay out of your classroom, projects, parental involvement, group structures) would you create to facilitate each student's getting the most out of the class? Explain how each of your plans is connected to what we know about individual development in general, and educational settings in particular.
3. Reflect on how the behavior and interactions in each course you are now taking are related (if at all) to the sex of the teacher and the students. Do you think your own behavior is related to your sex, and might you get different things out of the course if you behaved differently in it?

The Family and Intimate Relationships

A family is a group whose members are linked by ties of blood, marriage, or adoption. Although extended family ties have important influences on individuals' lives, the greatest significance of the institution for the gendering of social life is in the household unit based on kinship. Kinship need not be legally based: People are considered socially married if they are in a cohabiting, economically interdependent, sexual relationship with the expectation of permanence. This broader meaning is becoming more widely accepted. For example, cohabiting couples, heterosexual and homosexual, are increasingly accorded the legal rights and responsibilities of marriage.

Despite the diversity of lifestyles and of ethnic, racial, and social class backgrounds that characterize U.S. society today, one experience that remains common to almost all people is that of growing up in a family-based household. The large majority goes on to spend significant portions of adulthood in family-based households, although an increasing proportion of the population lives alone or with "roommates" (people who share housing costs but are not otherwise economically interdependent) for sizable periods in their lives.

After a discussion of the family *as a social institution*, we will review the changing patterns of family structure in the contemporary United States. Despite these changes and its numerous forms, the family remains central to social life in general and the gender system in particular. Its durability stems in part from the functions that it serves. Our survey of these functions includes emotional and sexual inti-

macy, economic provision for members of the family-based household, housework, reproduction, and child rearing. Finally, we turn to problems of violence against children, partners, and the elderly.

A Social Group and a Social Institution

Popular thought on the family tends to focus on its character as a small group, and on the family-household as the arena for the interactions of diverse personalities. From this viewpoint, people explain each family's arrangements (such as the initial choice of partners and the development of household routines) by the individual personalities of the particular members, and the idiosyncratic ways in which their patterns evolve or are negotiated over time. Gender is only implicit in this way of looking at families through taken-for-granted notions of how biology and socialization influence personality development and personal preferences.

Although sociologists don't reject this perspective, they emphasize that the family is a social institution, sharing many common patterns of structure and process, regardless of the particular composition of each small group. As unique as the personalities of individual family members may be, their family arrangements are rarely unique because of the influences of various socially learned expectations, attitudes, and behaviors.

Circumstances outside individual families are less visible but very powerful in shaping family life generally and gender relations in particular. For example, the economic resources people bring to the family will limit the household arrangements they can choose. Battered women often stay with their husbands because they have neither the money nor the credit record to establish another household for themselves and their dependent children. What seem to be simply personal choices are not merely coincidentally similar among large numbers of women, but reflect their common economic vulnerability. That common economic vulnerability is not a coincidence, either, but results from *macro-social* patterns of occupational segregation and the lower average pay that women receive compared to men. The legal institution (including Family Courts and police departments) also influences the choices battered women make. On the *middle level*, in most jurisdictions law enforcement agencies provide inadequate protections for battered women who try to flee abusive partners. When a bat-

tered women stays with her batterer, outsiders may interpret her inaction as a product of her psychology. However, although the economic factors and the shortcomings of the criminal justice system may be unknown to outsiders, they are significant in their impact.

The inflationary spiral that began in 1967 provides another illustration of how macro-social circumstances affect arrangements within the home. At that time, white, U.S.-born couples expected that mothers of young children would stay out of the labor force. Instead, the rapidly growing cost of living led wives to return to the workforce sooner after the birth of children than they had anticipated. Larger proportions of childless wives continued working. Husbands and wives might have agreed that this was an unfortunate decision, but they could not insulate themselves from the economic trends in society. They had to choose between common cultural values: the non-employed mother or wife, or the materially acquisitive style of life. Although individual couples experienced the wife's employment as a personal issue, there were many cultural, social, and economic similarities among couples' lives. Seeing the common elements in these situations helps us understand the social patterns that have implications for the changing character of gender in family life.

Some large-scale social changes are obvious in their impact on people's home lives. The social movement aiming to extend to gay and lesbian people the rights enjoyed by heterosexuals in the United States is now thirty years old. It has led to the formation of more households of committed same-sex partners. As the visibility of lesbians and gays grew, so too did the ways in which they are denied equal rights, such as the right to adopt a child and the right to make medical decisions for an incapacitated partner. Not all same-sex partnerships are openly sexual, with a presentation to the outside world of a roommate, rather than a couple, relationship. Concerns with serious homophobic reactions of employers, neighbors, and extended family members have contributed to individual decisions to remain "closeted." The 2000 U.S. Census provides each household with the opportunity to indicate that people in it are living together as unmarried partners. When the results are completed, they will provide one of the most reliable estimates of the extent of same-sex partners in the contemporary United States.

Another large-scale area of social change affecting the family is the increasing life-span of people in the United States. The family is also the first source of support for extended kin who need help. While

the ability to help one another varies, and geographic distances from kin undermine some kinds of help, caregiving to elders is still a family responsibility (Hatchett and Jackson 1999). Although men often participate in elder care, the main burden lies on the shoulders of women family members (Hooyman and Gonyea 1997).

A careful examination of the family is essential to understanding the ways in which life experiences are tied to one's gender. Family-household tasks (most crucially including tasks related to economic subsistence, child rearing, caring for elderly family members, and household maintenance) are at the core of the gendering of roles both within and outside the home. They are central to ways in which people, regardless of their sexuality, work out a sense of themselves as feminine or masculine (Connell 1995).

Finally, the home is the site of several significant social problems tied to gender. The social isolation and economic marginality of single elderly women are more extreme because of the cultural norms of households based on nuclear family rather than extended family or nonfamilial relationships. Alternatives to living alone, such as shared housing, are not considered acceptable by most people in this culture. Men have the unhappy likelihood of shorter life spans than their female partners. About one half of elderly women (over 65 years old) were widows in 1997; of these about 70 percent lived alone (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1998). Even though some elderly women prefer to live alone, others do not do so by choice.

Feminist interest in gender stratification on the level of individual experience has been important in directing attention to physical and psychological abuse, a long-standing reality that has only recently been defined as a problem. As we shall see in the chapter on political and legal institutions, gender politics on the macro-level have been important in defining family violence as a societal problem and in pursuing justice for victims. Just as stable family arrangements reflect external influences, problems in the home or in dating relationships are more completely understood when placed in a larger context. For example, analyzing violence against women by intimates requires placing it within a broader pattern of violence against women (Feltey 2001). Further, rates of family violence rise in periods of high unemployment, downward mobility, and homelessness—all related to conditions of the economy (Chasin 1997).

In this chapter, we focus on the family as a changing institution in which gender is enacted, taught, and revised. We emphasize the ways in which the culture and the socio-economic structure of the United States influence family arrangements, and the ways in which families are an active site for redefining masculinity and femininity (Roschelle 1999).

Patterns of Family Structure

The experience of growing up in a household based on family ties is nearly universal in this society; however, the particular composition of households and individuals' timing of taking on new family statuses have changed greatly in recent decades. Family life in the United States is more varied than ever before. Only a minority of family-based households are currently composed of a married couple and their offspring. Many others are composed of married or unmarried partners, either childless or with grown children. Single-parent families and multi-generation families have become increasingly common and visible. Numerous influences have contributed to these changes, some of which (like the development of the birth-control pill) are explicitly related to gender-oriented social arrangements and ideologies. Other influences on gender arrangements have been the unanticipated consequences of apparently unrelated trends (such as the loss of well-paid "men's" jobs when industrial corporations relocated to other countries).

Most Americans still marry, although the age at which they marry has risen steadily in recent decades. Men and women married, on the average, in their early 20s in 1970. By 1994, women's average age was almost 25, and men's almost 27. The average two-year age gap between the sexes at marriage has remained consistent, with men typically being older at first marriage than women (Costello et al. 1998). Increasing proportions of people in their late 20s and early 30s have never been married, and population analysts predict that a somewhat larger proportion of Americans will never marry than in earlier generations. Although such predictions are notoriously risky, the act of deferring marriage will result, for some women especially, in the permanently lost opportunity of finding a marriage partner. As long as it is normative for husbands to be older than their wives, the postponement of marriage by a woman increases the pool of women

with whom she will be competing if she seeks a husband. However, not all unmarried people have deferred marriage—many have rejected it as a personal goal. Women are now more often able to afford to remain single because of expanded occupational opportunities. Thus, they are able to reject marriage, for reasons such as their educational goals, their perceptions of available mates or their own parents' marriage, or their responsibilities to their kin (Ferguson 2000).

The decisions to marry at all, with whom, and when are all intensely personal. Suggesting that they are influenced by macro-social patterns contradicts our own experiences of thinking about marriages and other intimate relationships. How do we bring together these two realities: the personal nature of decisions, and the observable similarities between our own decisions and those of others throughout the society? These are linked by the impact of our perceptions of our choices and our assessments of their desirability. For example, if being sexually active before marriage is considered sinful, or if there is no place to get reliable contraception easily, then sexually mature adults will be motivated to marry earlier than they might otherwise. Cultural and subcultural beliefs, and social structural factors (like access to child care or the availability of contraceptives), all influence people's marriage decisions. Because these circumstances are common, there will be common patterns of personal decision making.

Thus, people continue to believe that a married couple should be economically independent. Not surprisingly, people with more positive attitudes toward marriage are more likely to marry than people less positively disposed toward marriage. When individuals with similar attitudes are compared, the more economically secure people are more likely to act on those attitudes (Sassler and Schoen 1999).

Nonetheless, the decision to marry (and its timing) differs for women and men. Many women perceive that career advancement is slowed by marriage, and the chances of one's future occupational success are improved by postponing marriage. Deferring marriage is not, in contrast, useful for men's career advancement occupationally, so men lack that motivation for remaining single. In addition, men do less housework after they enter a marriage than beforehand, while women do more (Gupta 1999). This, too, may help explain why men are ready to marry sooner than women are.

Family formation is not limited to those who marry. In 1995, more than three and a half million heterosexual couples lived

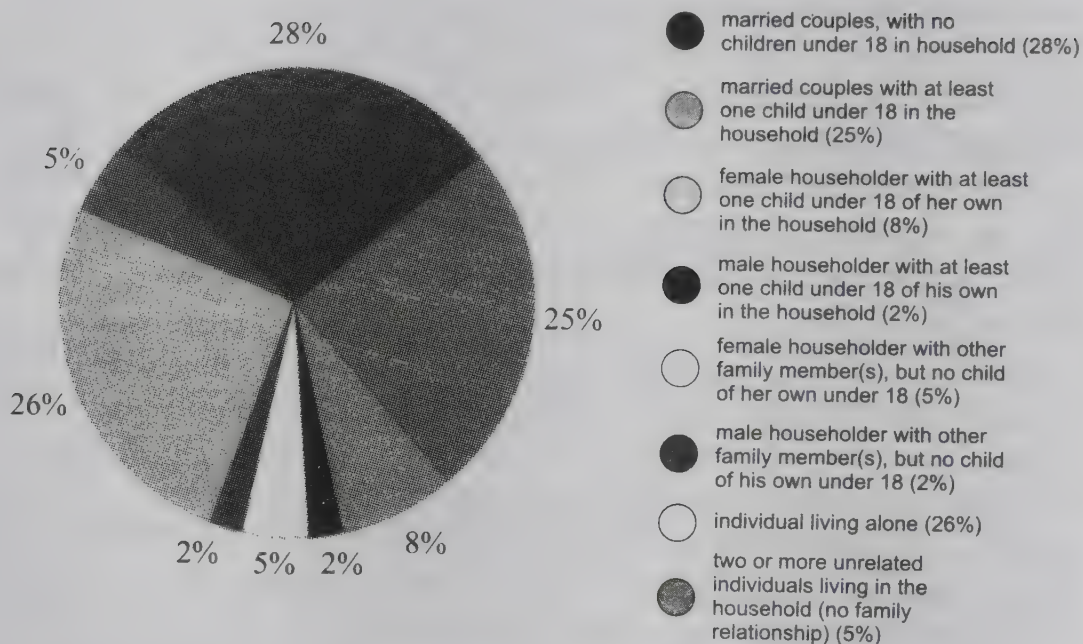
together in the United States (Costello et al. 1998). Almost two million households were composed of same sex couples. In addition, family-based households include single parents with their children, and unmarried couples (heterosexual and homosexual) with the children of one or both adults. Although teenage motherhood is still defined as a problem (i.e., "children having children"), the social stigma of illegitimacy has weakened in the dominant culture. Nonetheless, the rate of teenage motherhood is declining (Lacey 1999). Having a realistic and attractive alternative to motherhood (educational or employment) is an important social structural factor that has led to this decline.

After more than a generation of rising divorce rates, the 1990s brought a leveling off or even slight decline. Still, given the real possibility of eventual divorce, it is economically sensible for women to postpone marriage until they have established themselves occupationally. Although most divorced people do remarry, remarriage after divorce has become less common, especially among women. In addition, remarriage does not occur as soon after the dissolution of the marriage as it did in the past, again particularly for women. Some of this drop in remarriage rates may be voluntary, as some women's occupations provide the economic security to live independently.

Despite the popularity of media portrayals of father-headed households, mothers continue to be the large majority of custodial parents after divorce. Because of the continuing earnings gap between the sexes, this factor contributes to a high incidence of poverty among single-parent households. Married couples have taken on parenthood later in their marriages, and at a later age. Influenced by the increased years of formal education of both sexes, and the increased career orientation of young women, this shift has implications for family life. The later start of planned parenting decreases the total number of children a woman will bear, and the longer period of marriage before children is related to greater marital stability.

Changes in household composition and in family status through the life course have not been accompanied by equally large changes in the economic opportunities available to women. Despite the much-heralded economic strengths of the late 1990s, less educated and less skilled workers have not done well. In addition, many people formerly earning a middle-class wage in industries, such as steel and automotive, have been hurt by downsizing, the export of jobs, and corporate mergers. Relatively low wages do not enable single mothers

Figure 4.1
U.S. Household Composition, 1998



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding off.

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 1999*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1999, Table No. 73.

to afford quality child care, which remains scarce in the public sector. The number of mother-headed households living in poverty has risen dramatically. Moreover, the problem of homelessness skyrocketed in the 1980s. It initially disproportionately affected single adults, but has become a major problem for women-headed households in communities with shrinking numbers of affordable housing units.

Marriage patterns among African Americans were similar to those among whites and Latinos until recent decades. African American women are currently much less likely to be married (Costello et al. 1998). This pattern results from several factors. First, compared to white men, there is a greater prevalence of economic insecurity among African American men (Sassler and Schoen 1999). Further, African American men have disproportionately high mortality rates and incarceration rates, contributing to an imbalance between the numbers of marriageable African American males and females. Recent reports of improvement in employment rates and declining

numbers of criminal convictions (Nasar and Mitchell 1999), however, may influence this trend in marriage rates.

African American women have positively viewed, even if less desirable, alternatives to marriage. A tradition of women's strength and autonomy facilitates women's view of themselves as able to live independently of men, and to rear their children successfully (Blum and Deussen 1996). Further, the children of unmarried African American women are more likely to have an ongoing connection to their father than are white children of unmarried women. Because of these different traditions and expectations, African American women may be more cautious about entering marriage than are white women, even as the economic situation of African American men improves.

The Importance of the Household and Family for Society

The family continues to fulfill essential needs for society, including reproduction, socialization, economic consumption, and care for dependent individuals. Labor power is reproduced by families, where the physical and emotional needs of workers are most likely to be met.

Each of these functions is associated with the gendering of family roles. However, since the early 1970s, the assignment of related tasks has become less tightly linked to the sex of the family member. This period influenced attitudes through the women's movement and behaviors through the inflationary spiral that diminished the spending power of husbands' earnings. The relative influence of these cultural and structural factors is a matter of disagreement (e.g., Mason et al. 1976). The *structural approach* emphasizes the increased need for both parents in a two-parent household to earn money (due to factors such as inflation or the lowered earnings of men in traditionally well-paid jobs). The *cultural approach* emphasizes changing attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be a good wife and a good mother, particularly the greater acceptability of employment outside the home. There is no doubt that both culture and social structure have been influential in loosening and even revising gendered arrangements within households.

Emotional and Sexual Intimacy

In contemporary United States beliefs, couples are supposed to be emotionally and sexually compatible—indeed, they should not marry if they are not, and divorce is considered acceptable if their emotional relationship erodes. Providing a site for sexual and emotional intimacy serves an important societal function, serving as an emotional “shock absorber” for the difficulties encountered in the economic sphere. Emotional intimacy at home may be more crucial for men, because women more often can rely on friends and other relatives for emotional support (Cancian 1985, 257).

For heterosexual couples, sexual behavior within, before, and outside of marriage—and how it is gendered—has been significantly influenced by changing contraceptive technologies (Goldin and Katz 2000). In the last thirty years, the availability of reliable contraception (coupled with at least partial availability of safe and legal abortion) has largely removed unwanted pregnancy as a deterrent to sexual activity. Furthermore, the availability of reproductive control with effective contraception and legal abortion has increased the ability of sexually active people to plan their futures rationally. Should a family invest savings in a down payment for an apartment that will require two incomes for its maintenance? Should a sexually active family member enroll in a training program that requires several years for completion? Couples can have sexual lives that are less charged by concerns of unwanted pregnancy, and people can make decisions about other aspects of their lives without having to be sexually abstinent. Sex before marriage is now widely accepted, which is one of the reasons that age at marriage is now later for the average U.S. adult.

In gay and lesbian relationships, unwanted pregnancy is obviously not an issue, but the AIDS epidemic and the possibility of other sexually transmitted diseases introduce a dimension requiring negotiation between lovers. Questions of fidelity and trust for both heterosexual and homosexual partners become central when decisions about safe sex practices are made.

In addition, medical care for lesbians and gay men sometimes reflects societal prejudices and caricatures (Stevens 1996). For example, stereotypes about lesbian sexuality have led some practitioners to assume that AIDS is irrelevant to women in same-sex relationships. Thus, homophobia can interfere with receiving high-quality gynecological care for women who are open about their lesbian iden-

tities. In 1999, the American Civil Liberties Union sued a gynecologist and the Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) he belonged to for his treatment of a patient. When the patient explained that she didn't need a contraceptive strategy because she is a lesbian, the physician asked her to use another physician for her future health care needs. As a result of the settlement, the HMO agreed to have an educational program for its health care practitioners (American Civil Liberties Union 1999).

In the absence of normatively acceptable and technically effective reproductive control, economic circumstances often required the postponement of marriage. During the Depression of the 1930s, for example, the need to avoid pregnancy for economic reasons was widespread. When effective technologies are lacking and out-of-wedlock childbirth is considered deviant, premarital pregnancies press couples into early marriage, affecting both parents. In addition, although many unplanned pregnancies result in loved children, some result in the birth of infants who are sooner or later abandoned or badly neglected.

The social construction of masculinity in the United States puts the highest priority on sexual potency. Further, male sexuality has traditionally, in this culture, been evaluated by the size of the penis, its ability to penetrate, and the capacity for frequent intercourse with climax. In other cultures, however, other aspects of male sexuality are not so overshadowed by penile function. The old expression "Slam, Bam, Thank You, Ma'am" refers to a particular male style of sexual behavior in which the man moves quickly to penetration and climax, and takes the woman's involvement for granted. This style allows a man to prove how virile he is, because he is able to reach orgasm quickly. The woman is servicing the man in such an episode. During the 1960s and 1970s, sexual counselors and women activists paid increasing attention to changing popular ideas about male sexual performance, emphasizing foreplay and attention to ways of enhancing a partner's sexual pleasure. "Mutuality," or focusing on the sharing of pleasure with each other, became the catchword for such advisers.

Even though men of all ages occasionally experience impotence (or penile erectile dysfunction), it becomes more common in older men. Pharmaceutical companies have recently developed drugs, such as Viagra, to treat impotence. Public discussions about Viagra and about marital sexuality more broadly illustrate revolutionary attitude changes in just a few decades. For example, former Senator and 1996

Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole has appeared in testimonial commercials for Viagra, speaking in general terms about its benefits to his own marriage.

From the first, with criticisms of its high price, Viagra has been the focus of serious and comic attention. At nearly ten dollars per use, this aid to sexual pleasure contradicts the old-fashioned view that "the best things in life are free." Other concerns about the impact of the drug on sexual intimacy have been widely expressed since its release to the market. Behaviorally, there is the concern that the drug may act to undermine a slow, mutually pleasurable period of foreplay. On the level of social attitudes, it reinforces traditional beliefs in penetration, hardness, and orgasm as the lynchpins of masculinity. However, the drug has had a more complicated impact. Although it was designed for male use, it is being used experimentally to enhance women's sexual experiences.

Providing for the Household

Earning the money for consumption and reproduction of labor power has been primarily and centrally the man's responsibility since industrialization. Higher pay for men than for women has been traditionally justified by the belief that a man supports a family but that a working woman does not have dependents. This "family wage" justification was widely accepted until the 1960s (Mason et al. 1976). Even among racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups in which wives' wage earning has been essential, husbands' responsibility has been seen as permanent—even if times got better, husbands should earn, but wives need not.

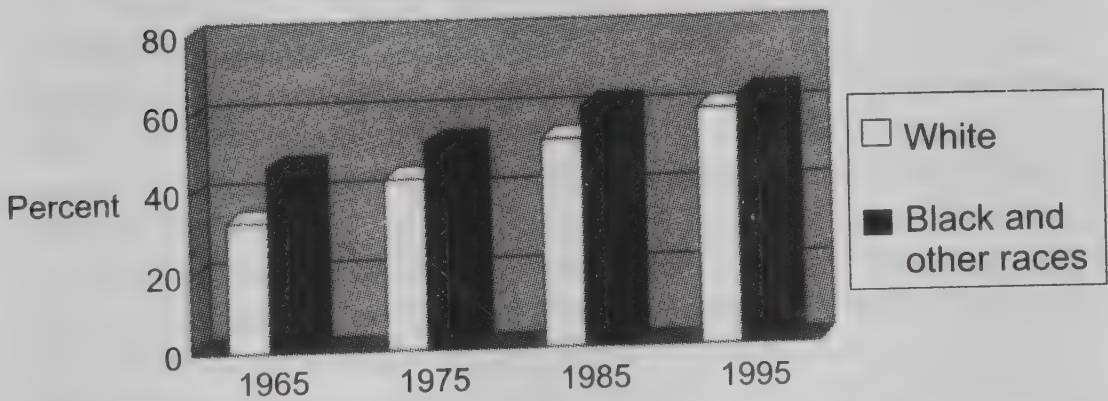
With changing attitudes toward women's roles, and the growth of occupations employers saw as "women's jobs," U.S.-born white women's employment outside the home has increased dramatically across all age groups and family statuses. For example, mothers of young children have had an enormous increase in labor force participation since the early 1970s. Increasingly, when both partners in a relationship work outside the home, they are both recognized as providing for the family. In a longer historical perspective, the period in which there was one provider (male) was quite short. That is, women and men were co-providers before industrialization and the application of "separate spheres doctrine" to daily life. As noted in Chapter 2, the luxury of the wife staying out of the labor force was not univer-

sally shared even during the height of the “separate spheres” belief. Then, as now, women of color were often co-providers for their families (Sudarkasa 1999).

Nonetheless, there are varied attitudes toward married women’s employment. Some custody rulings reflect judges’ continuing belief that a mother who hires a child care worker is a less adequate parent than is a father who relies on a child care substitute while he is at work. Ratcliff and Bogdan (1988) found that a majority of the unemployed women in their study encountered a lack of social support for their own interest in finding new employment. At the same time, they did encounter some support from members of their social networks for reemployment as a valued and legitimate goal.

Figure 4.2

Percentage of Married Women in the Labor Force 1965-1995



Sources: For 1965–1975 Table 13–15 “Presence and Age of Children by Labor Force Participation Rates for Married Women, Husband Present: 1965, 1970, 1975” in *A Statistical Portrait of Women in the U.S.* 1976, p. 73. Current Population Reports. Series P-23, No.58. Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. For 1985 and 1995 “Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population by Marital Status, Sex, and Race, 1976–1995” in *Handbook of U.S. Labor Statistics*. Eva E. Jacobs, Editor. 1997. Lanham, Maryland: Bernan Press, pp. 21–23.

For African American and immigrant wives and mothers, employment has traditionally been necessary, and socially accepted as an important contribution, rather than for the “pin money” that white, U.S.-born couples might label women’s earnings. Immigrant employment in settings dominated by immigrant group members, such as family-owned businesses, was unlikely to provide women with the

increased standing at home that middle-class women associate with paid employment. A study of Korean immigrant women found that husbands helped out more with household tasks because of their wives' report of exhaustion, rather than because of notions of equality based on the wives' economic contributions (Lim 1997). However, wives may have felt that their complaints of exhaustion were more legitimate to express because of their economic contribution to the family.

Housework

Men's employment continues to be taken for granted, and men continue to earn more, on the average, than the women with whom they live. Nonetheless, by the mid-1990s, wives' earnings were greater than their husbands' in more than one out of five dual-earner homes (Winkler 1998). One perspective suggests that wage equity would influence other ways in which marital and parental roles are gendered: the more that women contribute, relative to men, the more nearly equal the division of unpaid work at home. As women's *hours* at paid work became closer to men's, the hours women put into housework and child care declined. However, except for homes in which the wife works full-time *and* there is an infant, and homes in which the adults work two different shifts, there continues to be very little change in the amount of work done by men. There may be other ways, however, in which there is greater parity between the spouses. For example, Winkler suggests that women earning more than their husbands may have a greater say than other wives do in decisions about how to use household resources (e.g., savings, earnings).

In same-sex couples, the division of labor is more likely to be worked out in new ways, because partners cannot simply depend on a traditional division of labor to get the jobs done. Further, there may be more awareness of issues of justice and equity between the partners (Schwartz and Singer 2001). However, unpaid work in the United States (whether in the household or as volunteer work for community organizations) tends to be ignored or underappreciated. Thus, the "use value" of housework and child care is generally overlooked (Benston 1969). Although there seems to be a greater interest in sharing tasks and achieving equity in same-sex partnerships, evidence suggests that gay relationships sometimes replicate this pattern of judging contributions by their monetary value. In one small study

of lesbian partnerships, this pattern appeared when one woman was employed and the other was at home. The contribution of the unpaid partner's labor was little acknowledged (Sullivan 1996).

Despite depictions of family life in the media, only a very gradual and relatively minor shift has occurred in who does how much of what tasks in the home (Robinson and Milkie 1998). Many responsibilities are largely unchanged (see, for example, Hochschild 1989, 271–273), although some tasks have moved from one spouse's responsibility to the other's, or to a gender-neutral status (e.g., men are more likely to wash dishes than their fathers were). The notion remains in most couples, nevertheless, that tasks have some "obvious" connection to one person or the other. Thus, the view that one partner should help the other out is different from a notion of shared responsibility for getting jobs done. In fact, in one study of young college graduates, researchers found that childless couples did have less traditionally gendered household task arrangements. However, the gendered division of labor and responsibility conformed to more traditional patterns among those couples with children (Perkins and DeMies 1996).

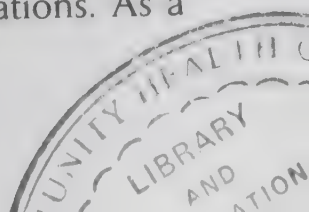
Most studies of household arrangements rely on individuals' self-reports. Research on the accuracy of such reports indicates that reports of one's own work are exaggerated, while assessments of other household members' contributions tend to understate actual work time (Press and Townsley 1998). Despite these methodological flaws, however, the patterned differences in partners' contribution to housework is well-established.

Variations in household arrangements are associated with different racial and ethnic groups, but generalizations about these are difficult and can be misleading. First, there are important social class and regional variations within ethnic groups (for example, see Suárez 1999 on Cuban Americans, and Martinez 1999 on Mexican Americans). As the time from the year (or generation) of immigration grows, assimilation continuously occurs. Household arrangements become less like those in the sending culture and more like U.S. patterns. Thus, in Islamic families, younger men and men born in the United States are more likely than their elders to help out with traditionally female-assigned tasks (Carolan 1999). **Biculturalism**, the flexibility to move between the design for living of one's ethnic group and that of the dominant culture, allows people to choose the household arrangements that suit the requirements of their particular situations. As a

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result, even people with similar ethnic, class, and other demographic characteristics may lead quite different family lives.

As evidence mounted up that wives' employment did not bring an equivalent change in housework, researchers suggested that equity in housework might come if there were a change in the relative earnings contributed by men and by women. With the persistence of earnings differences, there are fewer households in which to examine this possibility. However, research that has focused on couples with wives' employment status greater than their husbands found that the wives were uncomfortable with the disparity and behaved in the home in ways to emphasize the traditional gendering of family life. For example, husbands who earned a small proportion of the couples' income were nonetheless described with "provider" language, rather than the "helping out" or "pin money" language that is generally applied to wives who earn such a proportion of a couple's income (Tichenor 1999). It is too simple to predict that a gendered division of labor will be undone when women spend more time "bringing home the bacon," or even when they actually bring home most or all of the bacon.

Finally, although working women with relatively good wages may be in a strong negotiating position in dividing up household tasks, if the marriage were to end, they would probably lose economically. This reality must, for some, influence just how far they reach in attempting to achieve what they consider a fair division of labor in the household. In fact, in a study of dual earner couples, Allen and Hawkins (1999) found that about 20 percent of mothers actually discouraged a more equitable division of labor with fathers. Like the women who earned more than their husbands, these women may be uncomfortable about the departure from traditional roles that their employment signifies, and choose to hold on to a version of femininity in which the mother is more involved than the father in daily tasks. Nonetheless, the majority of women in the Allen and Hawkins research did report a more collaborative household arrangement with their husbands.

The impacts of differences in performance of housework are varied. Clearly, one who does less housework has more time to use in other ways. But, there is also an impact on attitudes toward the relationship when housework is perceived as inequitably shared. Thus, in a national survey, women who perceived the division of labor in their relationships as unfair were more likely than other women to be

depressed (Bird 1999). It was the perceived inequity, rather than the actual number of hours spent doing housework, that was crucial to the individual differences in depression. More casual observations also suggest that men's sharing in unpleasant tasks promotes emotional closeness with their wives. As several men comment in *Chore Wars* (a 1995 video), cleaning the toilet is useful for putting their partners in the mood for sex!

Technology and the Family

The kinds of work that are done in the home and the ways they are performed reflect contemporary technologies, which have been shaped in part by cultural values and beliefs about the nuclear family (Cowan 1983). Some technological innovations have been unsuccessful at least in part because central production of these services violated notions of the family as a private sphere. For example, early attempts at marketing full meals to be produced centrally and delivered to households may have failed because of their impersonality, which contrasted with the rhetorically loving touch of the wife and mother. By the time the microwave oven was marketed (decades after its initial development), the growing pattern of family members' differing schedules contributed to its success. For example, almost half of the employed women in a national survey worked different hours than their husband or partner (Greenhouse 2000).

However, the common assumption that successful innovations reflect the choice of the market is oversimplified. Often the market has only a limited range of choices, which reflect the imagination and judgment of people with capital to invest in "debugging" innovations, developing systems of production, and carrying out a marketing strategy. Further, many innovations do not function alone but must be supported by a technological system (e.g., how would a station wagon function on unpaved roads?). When the community or society puts a supporting system in place, it is unlikely to contribute to other systems necessary to support alternative technological choices.

Perhaps the most expensive example of a technological system with huge implications for family roles is the combined development of the automobile, the construction of roadways to serve it, and the destruction (either actively or through slow disintegration) of systems of mass transportation. The results for parents are significant (Wajcman 1991). Parents have different tasks in areas with excellent

public transportation systems than they do in areas where children can travel only by car. A standard key chain tag or decal to put on car bumpers or inside their windows says "Mom's Taxi." This reflects the central role that transporting family members has for suburban mothers. When mothers are not available to transport their children, substitute labor must be found, or children's choices of after school and vacation activities are greatly limited. Not only the affluent are dependent on the private automobile: Other uses for family resources must sometimes be shortchanged when families must keep cars running to provide essential transportation (Freund and Martin 1993).

Reproduction

Technologies of reproduction, such as in vitro fertilization, sex determination, and surrogate mothering, are also shaped by dominant cultural forces (Rothman 1987). Not all potential technological innovations are pursued with capital investments and human expertise. Instead, the choice of which challenges to take on is influenced by researchers' view of what is a problem and what kinds of solutions are acceptable, as well as designers' ideas about what innovations the public will adopt (Casper 1998). Decisions and developments, made one step at a time and without public policy discussions, have led to the ever earlier possibility of a fetus surviving outside its mother, and thus to a steady undermining of women's rights over their own bodies by assertions of fetal rights. As we saw in the chapter on culture, the cultural backgrounds of social-policy decision makers influence (both consciously and unconsciously) scientific and technological development.

The greater possibilities offered by technologies of contraception and fertility are limited by the costs of devices and procedures. The dominant cultural preference that people bear children is connected to the much greater availability for those with private health insurance policies, that is, for medical services to insure reproduction than for services to avoid it. Prescription birth control pills, legal for more than thirty years, were almost never paid for (even in part) by insurance plans (King and Meyer 1997), until the development of Viagra. With its quick acceptance by insurers, the lack of coverage for oral contraceptives became a widely recognized inequity. By 2000, many policies had changed, but others continued to be inequitable (Lewin 2000).

The extremely costly medical care required to support very premature births (and often the chronic problems of people whose very premature births would previously not have been sustainable) has a significant impact on the other medical and surgical services that society can afford to provide its members. Finally, individuals with public health insurance (Medicaid) are in a very different situation. The social policy, and thus their insurance coverage, discourage reproduction, providing contraception but no subsidy for infertility treatments.

As women's opportunities have expanded, attitudes towards becoming a mother have become more complicated. The social construction of femininity has long held that having children is central to being womanly. Essentialists see the choice to become a mother as a biological imperative for all women. But social researchers describe an extremely varied reality, rather than one in which genes, brains, or hormones determine the decision to reproduce and to nurture children.

Postpartum depression is a recognized problem among new mothers. A biological explanation focuses on rapidly changing hormone levels, but there is increasing understanding that the reaction may in part be due to women's mixed feelings about being a mother. The popular cultural belief that all women are meant to be mothers and that one immediately loves her newborn infant contribute to the difficulties of women who experience postpartum depression. A self-help movement of such mothers simultaneously asserts women's power to help themselves and accepts that something is wrong with a woman who does not immediately embrace motherhood (Taylor 1996).

Child Rearing

In addition to relying on a family group to reproduce new members, society relies on the family to take care of the young until they are able to survive independently. Gendered patterns of parenting are central to the everyday tasks we call "child care" as well as to the more highly regarded, long-term job of guiding the young to be emotionally and physically healthy as well as conforming members of society.

As we discussed in the last chapter, socialization into gendered roles (e.g., son, mother) and into gendered aspects of apparently sex-neutral statuses begins within the family-based household. The family is also the primary setting for learning how to "do gender," the

gendered aspects of behavior patterns that transcend particular roles. The child learns rules that are not status-specific but that apply, unless specifically overridden, as one behaves throughout the day or life. The family shares the responsibility for transmitting the culture to the new generation along with other social institutions, such as the church, the school, and the media. Nonetheless, it is still the first teacher of the ideologies justifying patterns of macro-social and micro-social gender stratification.

Researchers studying one-parent families have repeatedly found that children do not need to live with adults of both sexes in order to learn about the gender system (e.g., Hannerz 1969). Conversely, in two-parent households, children's social development is not harmed by a traditional division of labor in which fathers have relatively little to do with child care activities (Lamb et al. 1986). Neither do children raised by same sex parents suffer from the lack of one parent of each sex (Patterson 1995).

Greater paternal involvement with children's daily lives as well as long-range relationships is, nonetheless, generally considered desirable. The Million Man March and the Promise Keepers are two social movement organizations of the 1990s that have sought to increase men's performance of their fathering roles. People vary in their definition of those roles—some activists argue for a return to a patriarchal household, while others want a democratic partnership with the mothers of their children.

There has been some increase in the daily tasks of child care by married fathers. The extent of fathers' involvement with their children's rearing (both daily caretaking and broader involvement, such as contributing economically to their support) is highly variable. Researchers have found that a man's involvement is strongly shaped by a wide range of factors, from the interpersonal (such as the quality of his relationship with the child's mother) to the institutional and economic (such as his employment opportunities; Gerson 1993). Although evidence shows somewhat greater paternal involvement *on the average*, this is produced by the growing involvement of some rather than all fathers.

Mothering, in contrast, is relatively independent of those variations in the immediate and larger environment (Doherty et al. 1998). Indeed, the cultural messages about mothering add to women's tensions because mothers are expected both to be intensely involved

with their children and to aim for goals of individualistic achievement in their lives (Hays 1996).

Increasing numbers of lesbian and gay couples are choosing parenthood and developing interpersonal strategies to establish acceptance for themselves as parents, and for their children (Dunne 2000). Same-sex parents often simultaneously challenge heterosexual family patterns while adhering to some traditional aspects of gendered parenting (Dalton and Bielby 2000).

Mothers in same-sex partnerships have particular challenges to establishing their maternal identities. If one partner is the biological mother, she tends to have an easier time winning recognition as a mother, and for her child, within her extended family. The co-mother (the nonbiological mother) has more difficulties gaining acceptance for the child with her kin children (Hequembourg and Farrell 1999).

The couple and their relatives may have concerns about the child's family ties, should the couple break up. As more legal jurisdictions recognize same sex unions, extended family, adoptive, and co-parents can be more certain of having a continued relationship with a child regardless of the long-term future of the couple.

Practices and policies outside the family also affect families that want to raise their children in more gender-equitable homes (Risman 1998). Choosing to stay home full-time is often more isolating for men than for women, who relatively easily find other women in the same situation. Fathers at home may feel uncomfortable as the only male in a group of child-rearing parents (Marin 2000).

Even public facilities may interfere with equitable parenting. For example, many public facilities have infant changing tables in women's rest rooms only. This obviously adds to the difficulty for men who might travel with or spend several hours away from home with their young children (and obviously for any single or homosexual fathers). Moreover, if a wife and husband go out together, there may be no practical way to share responsibility for this very real parental task—the architecture mandates that it be “women's work.” One father gave up his job as an employment discrimination attorney to take care of his infant. As a result of his initiative, the Lord & Taylor department store chain reconfigured its restroom areas, providing changing tables in men's rooms, or a “family” restroom area for parents of either sex to use with their small children (*National Law Journal* 1995).

Taking unpaid leave for child care is less realistic for the parent who earns more money—and so economic differences in men's and women's earnings interfere with many couples' choosing a nontraditional arrangement of father at home and mother at work. Couples with a serious commitment to an equal involvement in child rearing can choose to do so, but many who might want to do not consider it sensible to give up income in order to exercise this option.

Nonetheless, in some families employed fathers are more involved in their children's daily care. This may be a choice made because of beliefs about the appropriate relations between men and women, or it may result when parents work on different shifts. Shiftwork is sometimes chosen so that children can be cared for at home even though both parents are employed. A national survey of working women recently found that spouses or partners working different shifts was most common among those with children under 18 years old (Greenhouse 2000). Some men who participate in such arrangements gradually take on housework tasks that are not male-identified, as well. Further, they may come to accept responsibility for their participation, rather than defining it as "helping out" (Coltrane 1996).

Violence in Intimate Relationships

Until the 1970s, violence against wives went largely unnoticed. Ideological views that the state should not interfere in domestic matters and police reluctance to do so were challenged with feminist activism, and the state acquired a stronger political and criminal justice foundation for intervening when children or adults were victimized by an intimate. The home is still the most likely place where a woman will be murdered, and her husband or partner is the most likely murderer.

Abuse or neglect of children is a matter of grave social concern. Laws have been changed that had placed the career of a school nurse in jeopardy if she mistakenly reported suspicions of abuse. Now professionals are at risk of prosecution if they do not make such reports. There is controversy about what to do when a child has experienced abuse. Many child and family advocates argue that children will do better if their families receive serious therapy rather than if the children are removed (often to inadequate foster placements or state-run

residences). Other child advocates argue against extending children's vulnerability by leaving them in the home. Either approach is costly, and, despite the serious public concern, both approaches are underfunded.

The situation of adults alleged to have committed abuse is affected by their access to economic, legal, and therapeutic resources. Poor women and men are least able to argue successfully that they have been unfairly charged, and least able to afford the kinds of treatment that might persuade government officials to allow them to keep their families together. Without the availability of public resources to improve the situation at home, children are removed. More affluent families are able to keep their children by paying for attorneys or therapists whose treatments should make the children's future safe.

It is often reported that mothers are equally, or more likely than fathers to abuse children. These reports neglect to mention that the average child spends a great deal more time with a mother around than with a father (in two-parent as well as single parent homes). When we compare the rate of abusive acts by parents *per hour that they spend with their children*, child abuse by fathers turns out to be a more serious problem than generally thought. This does not negate the existence of child abuse by mothers, but suggests that it is inaccurately viewed as *the* most likely abusive relationship (Featherstone 1996).

There is a push toward framing and discussing family violence in gender neutral terms, which mask the differences in the patterns of violent behavior by and towards women and men (Kurz 2001). To understand the dynamic of each demands being aware of which sex we are discussing. For example, research on elder abuse is usually cast in gender-neutral terms, although the most frequent pattern, by far, is younger men's abuse of elderly women (Whittaker 1996). As we saw in the section on the role of knowledge professionals in culture, the way that a question or problem is phrased will influence the ways in which experts think about answering or solving it. Ignoring the gendered pattern interferes with developing more sophisticated explanations of the patterns of elder abuse, and designing effective strategies to end elder violence.

Similarly, the term *spouse abuse* is often used instead of *wife abuse*. Some researchers have maintained that rates of abuse by women towards husbands have been underreported, and are actually comparable to the rates of violence by husbands against wives. These reports receive much popular attention (an interesting exception to popular

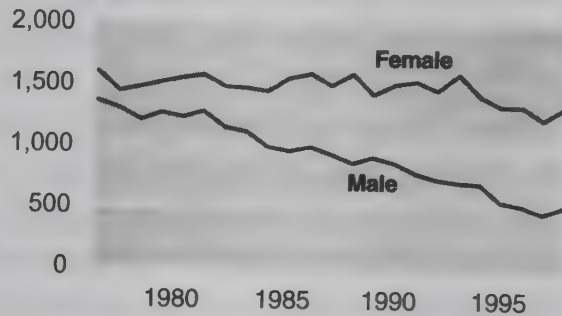
Homicide and Intimacy

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, women are much more likely to be murdered by present or former husbands or boyfriends than are men to be murdered by present or former wives or girlfriends. The intimacy victimization of men has declined steadily and significantly from 1976 to 1998, while women's murder by intimates was only stable from 1976 until 1993, when it declined somewhat until an upturn in 1998 (Figure 4.3a).

Figure 4.3a

Homicides of intimates by gender of victim, 1976-98

Number of victims

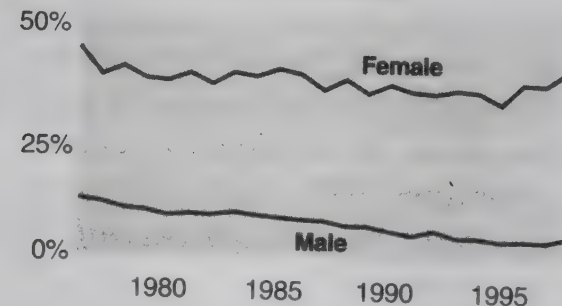


Looking at homicide rates from a different angle, we see (Figure 4.3b) that female murder victims are far more likely than male murder victims to be killed by an intimate. For example, in 1998 about one-third of female victims were killed by an intimate, and about 4 percent of male victims were.

Figure 4.3b

Proportion of all homicides involving intimates by gender of victim, 1976-98

Percent of victims killed by an intimate



Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. "Homicide trends in the U.S. Intimate homicide." Accessed at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.html.

fascination with sex differences). However, more careful analysis of the evidence used in the reports reveals that acts of women against men are likely to be something like a slap in the face by a smaller woman to a larger man, or a jab in the shoulder. Violence by men against women is more likely to be physically threatening or actually harmful, like being shoved against the wall. Homicide rates clearly indicate that a prevalence of men rather than women have murdered spouses or present or past "girlfriends," despite the popularity of movie and television plots to the contrary.

In addition, some surveys are misleading because they combine the reports of individuals who have experienced a single violent act with individuals who are in relationships characterized by periodic episodes of violence. The fact that men are much more likely than women to be regularly violent toward their partner is hidden by surveys designed this way. Furthermore, those men who are victims may be more economically able to leave an abusive relationship than are women, because of the continuing earnings gap between the sexes.

Social researchers have long established that all forms of family violence are more common during economic hard times; men's abuse of women is often related to the woman having relatively greater resources than the man (see, for example, McCloskey 1996). Whether the resources are financial, prestige, or interpersonal (e.g., connection to a supportive family network), simply having greater resources makes a woman a threat to the dominance so important to some men.

Although violence obviously has physical and emotional costs, it has economic costs as well. Because violent men are likely to resent, and be set off by, some challenge to their power in the relationship, a woman's pursuit of economic independence, or simply of some improvement in her economic situation, is often related to increased violence against her. Women receiving welfare may find it difficult to take training courses or jobs because their partners either undermine their attendance, or are actively violent to make participation impossible (Curcio 1999). With the changing welfare legislation (discussed in detail in Chapter 5), welfare support is limited to five years in an individual's lifetime, with no more than two years of support during one period of assistance. The law allows states to waive these limits for victims of domestic abuse. However, most victims of domestic abuse are afraid to report it, and thus are likely to lose this one, if inadequate, source of economic subsistence as they reach these personal limits. The reaction of the abusive men in their lives is a cause of grave concern.

Even though nonpoor women also suffer physical abuse from intimates, the rates of victimization are lower. This difference probably reflects a combination of factors: (1) among women seeking help, poor women may have fewer alternatives to official reporting than more affluent women have; (2) more economically secure men do have alternatives to physical power over their female intimates—they are likely to have the power to reward or punish with money and other economic resources; and (3) conflict and violence are more common in stressful situations, and poverty adds stress to people's lives.

Finally, violence in intimate relationships between people who do not live together has received growing attention. News reports are common about the murder of people who have ended a dating or more intimate relationship; the murderer is the rejected suitor or lover. These cases are overwhelmingly attacks by men on women. In the 1990s, laws were passed in several states against stalking, or the practice of following another person with whom one is (typically sexually) obsessed. Stalkers sometimes are rejected lovers, although they may be relative strangers. Like other forms of intimidating behavior, stalking is much more commonly practiced by men, with women as victims. Both radical feminism and multiracial feminism bring insights to the study of violence in families and the ways in which family units are perceived by outsiders and treated by public agencies.

The radical feminist viewpoint would explain the push toward gender-neutral language and the exaggeration of maternal rates of child abuse as patriarchal attempts to mask the much greater rates of male than female violence toward intimates. The multiracial feminist approach would bring our attention to the differences in resources that people have available to deal with family problems, as well as the hidden role of economic pressures on the occurrence of family violence. In addition, an increasingly common critique of media coverage of intimate violence is essentially a multiracial feminist account: the media give more coverage to the sexual victimization of white women, and especially nonpoor white women, than they do to lower-status women.

Summary

Despite dramatic changes in beliefs and practices, the household retains special significance in the gendering of social reality. It is the

locus of much work, particularly work that gets little social recognition and that is differentially assigned and performed depending on social meanings attached to the biological categories of male and female. It is the primary site for early childhood socialization and for emotional and sexual intimacy in adulthood.

The household is the primary unit of economic consumption and as such is the unit of deprivation when the adults are unable to gain sufficient income. This ability, as we shall see in the next chapter, remains strongly related to membership in gender, racial ethnic, and social class categories. Work arrangements also have implications for the reality of home life, because these two spheres are not separate for men or women. The economic discrimination against men of color and the deteriorating workplace conditions for white working-class men result for many in an inability to succeed as stable breadwinners. Although breadwinning is no longer an exclusively male responsibility, it remains an essential aspect of the roles of husband and father. Thus, when productive work with adequate earnings is precarious, family life is vulnerable.

Discussion Questions

1. If every person were to have the opportunity to achieve satisfaction in both family and occupational activities over her or his lifetime, what would that require? What aspects of social structure would need to be changed?
2. Reflect on several current television shows, and the ways that they present gender relations in intimate relationships. In what ways do they seem accurate, and in what ways inaccurate, compared to the description of contemporary patterns in this chapter?
3. People are increasingly forming marital and other intimate unions with people outside their own racial-ethnic group. Is this likely to result in a growing similarity of gender patterns (as racially and ethnically distinctive patterns are interwoven) or a growing diversity, as the variety of combinations of racial-ethnic heritages multiplies among households? What leads you to your conclusion?

The Economy and Work

An individual's links to the economy have crucial influences on many aspects of the quality of that person's life: political power, material well-being, access to educational opportunities, and even length of life are closely tied to one's position in the stratification system. So, too, is the ability to set one's offspring on the road to economic well-being. A household based on kinship involves economic interdependence: individuals who themselves earn no money are usually connected to the economy through others in their home. Children's economic position is initially the same as the adults with whom they live, and because of the importance of class position, parents typically do all they can to assist their children's future economic status. For those with "something to lose," decisions are made with an eye to maintaining all current advantages. For those low in the economic hierarchy, decisions are made in the hopes of improving the children's opportunities. Obviously, decisions are made among choices that are perceived as possible, or realistic.

Because work has been central to definitions of masculinity, changing opportunities for economic participation have significant implications for men's identities. Before industrialization, many men were self-employed or worked in family enterprises (farms or workshops), in which most women worked as well. Industrialization meant that most men became subordinate to an unrelated "boss" at work. In addition, few men now have jobs with demands for physical strength, which used to be a common way to establish one's masculinity. Indeed, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, technological and organizational changes throughout society led to a crisis in

the cultural definitions of masculinity and required a revisioning of the justifications of patriarchy.

Men and women currently participate in the labor force in almost equal proportions. They share the experience of several decades of radically changing employment possibilities. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, wives' and mothers' employment outside the home became increasingly acceptable even in the absence of economic hardship. By the end of the twentieth century, young women found it hard to believe that being employed could threaten any definition of femininity. To understand how gender is related to the economy, and how that has changed, we need first to review the enormous changes that have occurred in the last 30 years.

The New Political Economy

The dynamic nature of the economy came to national attention in the 1980s with an awareness of the loss of U.S. dominance globally, the changing structure of the job market, and the increasingly "high tech" character of work. The changes in the economy have been as significant as changes in cultural beliefs in the process of shaping the relation of gender to individuals' economic participation, and to gendered arrangements within families and households.

In the early 1970s, OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) took an aggressive stance toward the amounts and prices of oil that it would make available to importing countries, including the United States. Oil shortages and skyrocketing fuel costs contributed to the development of economic **stagflation**, or low growth but high inflation rates. In the following years, U.S. corporations increasingly became transnational rather than legally and physically located only in this country. Manufacturing jobs, particularly those in unionized industries, were exported to low-wage regions of the United States and the world. Corporations also sought locations with fewer government regulations (e.g., of polluting industrial processes and of occupational hazards to workers) to increase their profits and thus the dividends they could pay to those people participating in the stock market. Well-paid jobs held by men disappeared, and inflation raised the price tag for maintaining a household's existing standard of living. As a result, women's employment outside the home became crucial to a growing number of families.

Starting with the “Reagan revolution” of the 1980s, corporate mergers and takeovers occurred at the highest rate of the twentieth century. Either closing down competitors, or combining their equivalent departments (such as sales or engineering), led to a significant loss of jobs. Thus, employers gained considerable leverage in the demands they could make on employees, and many corporations laid off large portions of their workforce. Those who remained were expected to work longer and harder, and usually did so in hopes of keeping their jobs. Despite increased economic productivity, wages did not increase. **Downsizing** is the process of cutting the size of a corporation’s workforce, but not its profits. In addition to relaxed federal policies regarding mergers, a number of corporate changes shaped the cutbacks in human resources. For example, positions were eliminated through the automation of both factory and office jobs (spurred by the newly developed computer microchip). Continuing a decades-long pattern, businesses transferred tasks from paid employees to consumers (e.g., entering one’s account number on the telephone before or instead of speaking to a customer service employee). As mergers and takeovers reduced competition, the quality and quantity of customer services also could be reduced. These reductions led to further job loss. Finally, a reduction of federal involvement in corporate practices (such as occupational safety regulations and consumer protections) reduced the kinds and numbers of jobs required to ensure compliance with such regulations.

The labor market has also changed as immigration to the United States has surged, bringing people from Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. New workers come from a wide range of educational and social class backgrounds, affecting the labor markets where they relocate. They often perform jobs for which there is a shortage of U.S. workers, but sometimes crowd a labor market and allow employers to hire at lower wages because of worker surpluses. Immigrant women tend to hold jobs at very high rates compared to other groups of women. The multiracial composition of the new immigration adds complexity to the intersection of race, class, and gender. It also contributes to the rate at which the U.S. population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, with projections that only a minority of the population will be white within the next few decades. Certainly political decisions will begin to reflect the changing composition of the electorate, having some impact on the inequalities currently associated with racial-ethnic identities.

In the 1990s, the economy underwent a major expansion, with a fast growth in jobs. Currently, skilled workers are in demand in many occupations. However, the fastest growing jobs continue to be those at the low end of the hierarchy. Wages in this sector have risen during the economic expansion, but not as rapidly as for jobs at the top of the employment scale. And, although most people who are “dislocated” (by corporate moves abroad, mergers, or downsizing) do find work within a year, on the average their new jobs pay less and are otherwise less desirable than the jobs they have lost. Older workers are particularly likely to lose work and to have trouble finding new jobs, partly because of age discrimination.

The economic boom of the mid- to late 1990s left out a large minority of individuals, who dropped even further below the average than they were already (e.g., *The New York Times*, September 15, 1999). Similarly, these low-end jobs rarely provide health care coverage. This continues to be a reason for women to stay on welfare: concern about losing medical insurance when moving into low-wage work (Edin and Lein 1997).

Finally, government has changed its approach toward families living in poverty. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (what most people refer to as welfare) was ended in 1997 after sixty years. It was replaced by a far more frugal system. With strict time limits—on both a single episode of need (two-year maximum) and for an individual’s lifetime (five-year maximum)—the new system forces parents to accept any work they can find. For those who receive public assistance and can find no job, there is usually a workfare requirement. If a recipient has a child over a year old, the agency is supposed to provide child care. This puts pressure on an already inadequate child care system. In 1999, New York State failed to use a substantial portion of its federally-funded child care allocation, because there were too few openings compared to the demand (Sengupta 1999).

With a workfare requirement, people must do assigned jobs to receive a stipend typically below the federal minimum wage. While receiving welfare, people are doing jobs that might otherwise be available to the overall labor market (e.g., cleaning city parks, enabling the city to hire fewer park workers for a higher wage). When they approach the time limit, or even earlier, individuals are forced by the new and punitive procedures into taking very poorly paid work. This lowers the prevailing wages in their area, thus having a negative

impact on semiskilled or unskilled workers who have not received welfare.

In other words, the public systems for connecting unemployed individuals to the economy negatively affect the employment situation of people who have been in the labor force all along. In addition, although immigrants generally have not displaced workers from desirable jobs, their availability has expanded the labor supply, which helps to keep wages low despite a booming economy. Finally, the boom has boomeranged for those who have become homeless, as the competition for housing among the affluent has removed many previously affordable units from the price range of the working poor.

Ideology and the Economy

It is hard to convince people that economic opportunities are gendered and that social treatment depending on one's sex is interrelated with categorization by race, ethnicity, and social class. The difficulty lies in the strong belief that people control their own destinies, a central tenet of U.S. ideology. In this view, people *should* have different rewards if they have made different efforts. In particular, it is popularly believed that the more formal education one has completed, and the more work experience one has accumulated, the better off a person will be economically. Although education does, on the average, raise a person's earnings, disparities exist between men and women at all educational levels. Moreover, for both sexes, at each educational level the average earnings of whites are higher than those of blacks and Hispanics (Tang 2000).

Despite evidence to the contrary, it is similarly believed that anyone who is willing to work can be self-supporting. During the Reagan presidency, in fact, this belief was often expressed by the leader of the country. For example, Reagan asserted that homelessness was nonexistent—a fantasy as patently unreal to those with homes as to those without in most American cities. Eventually, he did acknowledge that he was mistaken. Similarly, when problems of poverty and unemployment were raised, Reagan cited the number of pages of “help wanted” ads in the Washington papers. He ignored the fact that many of these positions either required credentials beyond the reach of most of the unemployed or would pay too little to bring a family above the poverty line. Such outright denial of people's limited con-

trol over reality can be understood among the successful, because these people are generally unwilling to attribute their success to luck or privilege. Nonetheless, a good deal of evidence has clearly demonstrated the existence and persistence of economic inequality and of its association with gender, race, ethnic group membership, and social class origins. As we see in the following sections, members of some social categories find it significantly easier than others to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

Economic Opportunities and Gender

Clearly, people's economic lives are not completely determined by their sex, race or ethnicity, and childhood social class position. It is more accurate to think of the system as one in which individuals' *probability* of affecting their economic situation will vary depending on these characteristics. For example, a white, middle-class man has better odds of being well rewarded for his work than an equally hard-working member of one or more of the lower-status categories. These odds fluctuate with the condition of the economy (i.e., the benefits of some booms do reach many people). But, more fundamentally, these factors have varying relationships to particular aspects of economic well-being. For example, one's *earnings* are influenced strongly by the combination of race and sex, but one's likelihood of being *unemployed* is much more influenced by race than by sex.

Most fundamentally, one's sex, social class, and race or ethnicity are related to whether or not one is considered to be in the labor force at all. To be a participant in the labor force means that a person is either employed or actively seeking work (unemployed). In order to qualify for unemployment insurance, for example, one must be formally labeled as actively seeking work. The status of others' participation is more difficult to classify. That is, new graduates or drop-outs who are not receiving unemployment benefits and are not employed are not included in official unemployment statistics. Sophisticated federal research procedures give a *relatively* accurate labor force participation rate for the population, and for many specific sub-groups. But they are seriously flawed for those who choose not to report their employment, such as those who are paid "under the table" to avoid taxation, those employed illegally, undocumented immigrants, people receiving benefits limited to the nonemployed, and individuals

employed in illegal activities. However, these sources of inaccuracy are consistent over time (although their prevalence may not be), making the long-term comparisons of labor force participation fairly reliable. This allows us to get a picture of how the economy is doing and how various groups are faring, compared to one another and also compared to themselves at different points in time.

The participation of women in the work force has increased steadily in the last 50 years. Only one-third of all women between 25 and 64 years old were in the labor force in 1948 (early in the baby boom, when many women who had worked during World War II had returned home and were bearing and raising children full time). By 1998, 72.4 percent of women 25 to 64 years old were in the labor force. White married women born in the United States have traditionally had the lowest participation rate of all women. Although a majority of married women of color and immigrant women were also traditionally at home and not counted as "in the labor force," women from these groups were less free than white women to stay out of the labor market. Some immigrant groups were more likely than others to have women do home-based work, thus respecting a cultural belief that women should not be actively involved outside their home (Davidson and Gordon 1979). For example, some groups have been especially likely to start family-based businesses, in which all family members are put to work (see Rosen 1987). Women's employment sometimes served the goal of their family's upward mobility, often motivating migration to the United States (Amott and Matthaei 1991). The need for women of color and immigrant women to work for money to insure their families subsistence reflected the lower wages paid to men of color and immigrant men compared to white men of equivalent skill levels. White, U.S.-born women without employable husbands have also participated in the labor market traditionally. Finally, many women who were not counted as workers were in fact doing financially productive, unreported work. For instance, they prepared food for sale, raised chickens, sold eggs, did sewing and other textile work, and took in laundry.

Looking at married women participants only, the racial-ethnic differences of the past are significantly less now (see Table 4.2). For example, in the 20-year period from 1976 to 1996, white wives' labor force participation rates increased from 44.1 percent to 60.6 percent. Both African American and Hispanic wives had a smaller increase: 56.7 percent to 67.3 percent for African American wives and 41.6

percent to 52.5 percent for Hispanic wives. Indeed, the white pattern of labor force participation became more like the African American pattern (the 12.6 percent gap between the two groups' rates of 1976 shrank by half to 6.2 percent), and less like the Hispanic pattern (the 2.5 percent gap of 1976 grew to an 8.1 percent gap in 1996).

Both men and women of color are, and have historically been, less likely to be fully employed than white men and women who are in the labor force. That is, they have been more likely to be out of work, to work fewer hours than they want to work, or to hold jobs for which they are actually overqualified. However, until the 1970s white women were more likely than other people to simply stay out of the labor force if jobs were scarce; thus, their relatively low unemployment rates overstated the opportunities available. This has changed in the last twenty years: many unemployed white women, rather than opting out of paid employment in a bad market, define themselves as looking for work, and are thus counted among the unemployed. This makes it more valid to include white women's unemployment rates in recent group comparisons.

White women share with women of color a pattern of significantly lower average earnings than men of the same racial or ethnic category, as indicated in Table 5.1. Historically, the higher pay for men's work was justified as a "family wage." That is, the earnings of the family's one wage earner were expected to provide also for his wife and children. Labor unions fought for and won acceptance of the concept of the family wage. Conversely, labor unions actively accepted low rates of pay for women. As a result, the earnings differences among groups of women were much smaller than the differences *between* men and women.

Clearly, this model was never perfectly suited to reality because some working men had no economic dependents, and some working women did. Furthermore, not all working men were paid a family wage. Wage discrimination was routinely practiced against men of color and immigrant men (in contrast, women's earnings were more similar). Their wives were traditionally more likely to participate in the labor force than married, native-born white women. As the economic changes of the 1970s and 1980s unfolded, many of the men who formerly had earned a family wage found their pay devalued by inflation, pulling women into the labor force who had previously not needed to be employed.

Table 5.1
Earnings and Unemployment Rates

	<u>1999 Weekly income*</u>	<u>As a percentage of:</u>			<u>Unemployment rate, 1999**</u>
		<u>White men's</u>	<u>White women's</u>	<u>Men of same race/ethnicity</u>	
Men					
White	\$638	—	—	—	3.6%
African American	488	76%	—	—	8.2%
Hispanic origin†	406	64%	—	—	5.6%
Women					
White	\$483	76%	—	—	3.8%
African American	409	64%	85%	84%	7.8%
Hispanic origin	348	55%	72%	86%	7.6%

*Median weekly earnings of full-time civilian wage and salary workers for 1999 from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Annual Average Tables from the January 2000 Issue of Employment and Earnings*. Table 37. "Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics." Accessed at www.bls.gov/cpsaatab.htm#empstat.

Percentages calculated by the author.

**Unemployment rates for 1999 for all members of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years old and over who were employed or actively seeking employment. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Annual Average Tables from the January 2000 Issue of Employment and Earnings*. Table 5, "Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin." Accessed at www.bls.gov/cpsaatab.htm#empstat.

†People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

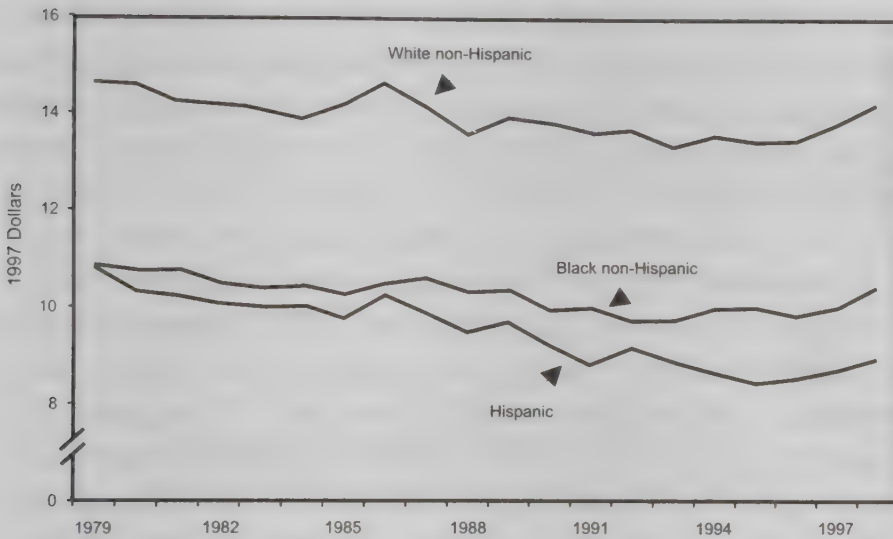
Interrelationships among earnings and employment rates require detailed attention. For example, while African American men and white women's average fulltime, year-round earnings are similar, African American men's higher unemployment means that they often do not work fulltime, year round. More complexities exist than even these comparisons show. Racial-ethnic categories include people from subgroups with distinctive economic experiences; for example, Cuban Americans' earnings are significantly higher and Puerto Ricans' are lower than most other Latinos' and Latinas' (Benitez 1998). Differences also appear depending on the particular age groups being examined.

When evidence is presented showing gender and racial/ethnic variations in economic position, the ideological response is to assert that these differences result from differences in people's educational levels. Although some people acknowledge inequalities in educational opportunities (related to one's family's economic position, as well as residential segregation by race), it is still popularly believed that those who overcome class-, race-, or gender-related obstacles, or all of these, to achieve educationally will have an equal economic outcome. Thus, employers are not seen as discriminating, but simply reacting to the differences in credentials among people, regardless of their category.

The evidence contradicts this view (see Reskin and Padavic 1994 for a thorough summary). While differences in economic position among categories defined by gender and ethnicity are multidimensional and complex, gender continues to be a significant factor in people's economic experience. For example, an analysis of the 1993 earnings of college graduates aged 25 to 34 showed that women earned about 83 percent, on the average, of men's earnings. Among older college graduates there was a larger pay gap; among 35- to 44-year olds, women's median income was 74 percent of men's. This is consistent with previous findings that lower rates of promotion and pay raises for women will in time enlarge the gap between women's and men's earnings. People's pay is also affected by the particular fields in which they were trained and in which they work. For example, comparing 25- to 34-year-olds who had a bachelor's degree in sociology, the women's median annual earnings were 88 percent of men's. Looking at 35- to 44-year-olds with a bachelor's degree in mathematics, women's median annual earnings were 73 percent of men's (Hecker 1998).

Rather than being produced by the differential treatment of individuals in similar jobs, many of the differences in earnings result from the continuing pattern of de facto occupational or job segregation by sex (Reskin and Padavic 1994). The **glass ceiling** is the barrier limiting women's promotion beyond particular levels in many organizations (Alessio and Andrzejewski 2000). However because people are often uninformed about others' job experiences (e.g., income levels), and because people usually generalize from their own experience, there is a gap between the reality and the perception of employment inequity in the U.S. today. By comparing Figures 5.1 and 5.2, you can see that the wage inequality between men and women has decreased somewhat, but by no means disappeared.

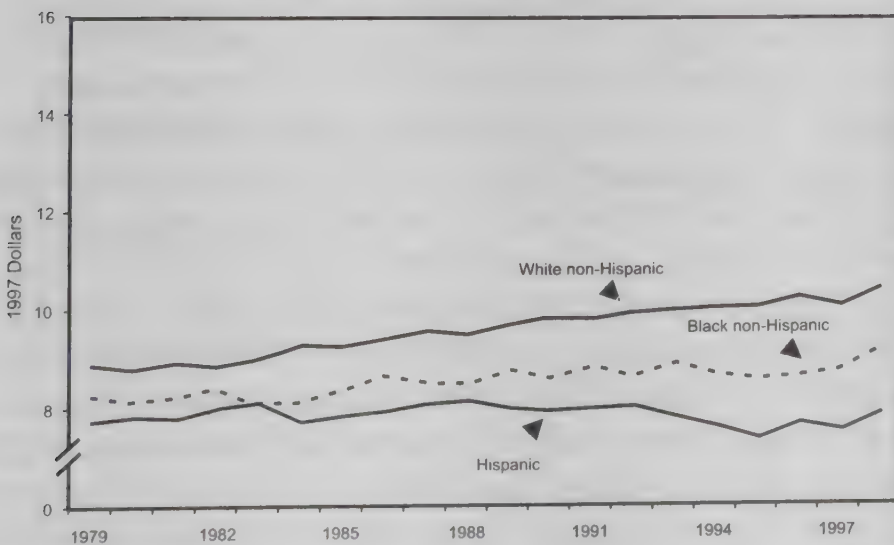
Figure 5.1
*Median Hourly Wages of Men Aged 16 and Older
 by Race and Ethnicity*



Note: Sample includes part-time as well as full-time workers.

Source: *Economic Report of the President*. 1999. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office. Council of Economic Advisors tabulations of Current Population Survey data, p. 108.

Figure 5.2
*Median Hourly Wages of Women Aged 16 and
 Older by Race and Ethnicity*



Note: Sample includes part time as well as full-time workers.

Source: *Economic Report of the President*. 1999. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office. Council of Economic Advisors tabulations of Current Population Survey data, p. 108.

Segregation at Work

Before the women's movement began in the late 1960s, most jobs were "men's jobs," with relatively few women working in them (e.g., carpentry; dentistry; school administration). Most women used to work in occupations that were 80 percent or more women (e.g., secretarial work, nursing). In response to the women's movement, occupational segregation began to decrease. Despite changes in the kinds of jobs considered appropriate for each sex, many occupations remain dominated by one sex or the other. Women's occupational distribution changed most rapidly in the 1970s, following legally mandated policy reforms. Pressed to comply with affirmative action requirements, corporations took advantage of experience among their existing female labor force and transferred women into previously men's jobs. For example, publishers of college textbooks integrated their previously male sales forces by moving women from secretarial to sales positions.

The sex-segregation of occupations declined more slowly in the 1980s, as the largest numbers of women who were freed up to change occupations had already done so. The least change in segregation rates was during the period from 1985 to 1995 (more recent analyses are not yet available). This reflects that the rapid decrease in many overtly discriminatory personnel practices was not followed by a similarly rapid decrease in more covert or subtle practices (Benokraitis and Feagin 1994). Women are now less likely to be in extremely segregated jobs, but their jobs are predominantly female, nonetheless. That is, for the most part, women have jobs where only the majority of people are women, rather than jobs where nearly all people are women. At the same time, men's entrance into predominantly female jobs has been slower than women's exit from extremely female jobs, but has increased in recent years (Wootton 1997). In the bigger picture, nonetheless, men and women are more likely to have co-workers of the other sex than they did 30 years ago.

Just how much integration has occurred? The **index of dissimilarity** is one way to indicate the extent of occupational segregation. Starting with the percentage of each sex in each occupational category, the index is calculated to show what percentage of people from one category (e.g., women) would have to change occupations in order to reach equality as indicated by the percentages of both women and of men employed in each occupation. For example, if the

index of dissimilarity for the United States was zero, it would mean that the proportion of males of every occupation was the same as the proportion of the whole labor force that is male (currently 53.9 percent). An index value of 100 would mean that the labor force was completely segregated by sex. The dissimilarity index, thus, refers to the extent to which women's and men's occupational patterns are different—the higher the number, the more segregated the occupational structure.

Table 5.2
*Occupational Distribution of White and
African American Women and Men 1999*

Percentage of employed persons working in:	White Men	White Women	African-American Men	African-American Women
Managerial and professional specialty	29.5%	33.4%	18.0%	24.5%
Technical, sales, and administrative support	19.7	40.6	18.4	38.2
Service occupations	8.9	16.2	17.4	25.6
Precision production, craft, and repair	19.4	2.1	14.3	2.1
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	18.3	6.5	29.8	9.4
Farming, forestry, and fishing	4.1	1.2	2.2	.2
TOTAL	99.9%	100%	100.1%	100%

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding off.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Annual Average Tables from the January 2000 Issue of Employment and Earnings*. Table 10. Accessed at www.bls.gov/cpsaatab.htm empstat.

Using this indicator, in 1995, slightly more than one-half of all employed women (53.5 percent) would have had to change occupations to make men's and women's occupational patterns identical. This is a slightly lower rate than ten years earlier, when the index was 58.1 percent. The index of dissimilarity is also used to describe the extent of segregation between smaller categories of population, thus enabling us to learn more about the intersection of gender with other major dimensions of economic stratification. It reveals that the segregation of the sexes is at about the same level within each of the three major racial ethnic groupings (1995 index of 52.9 for African Americans, 54.1 for whites, and 56.0 for Hispanics; Wootten 1997, p. 18).

There are serious limits to the index of dissimilarity. Even where an occupation has comparable numbers of women and men, individual firms often restrict the hiring of members of particular groups into that occupational position (**job segregation**). For example, although both sexes are food servers, waiters (males) usually work in more expensive eateries than do waitresses. As a result, they are paid a higher hourly wage, get larger tips because meals are more expensive, and have help on their job (such as workers who clear tables). In contrast, waitresses' workplaces often require servers to do other tasks as well, such as cleaning bathrooms at the close of business.

Federally collected statistics often summarize occupational information in ways that hide significant differences in the situation of men and women in the occupation. For example, the servers' jobs described above would be lost in a report that puts all food service workers together. Similarly, a report of the total numbers of men and women physicians would mask the disproportionate employment of men in the more prestigious and better-paid medical specialties and work settings (Lorber 2001). Perhaps one day, federal statistics will show that an equal representation of men and women from each racial-ethnic category are selling new cars. But, car salespeople are paid on commission: We will also need to know who is selling luxury cars and who is selling the budget models. Will it be like real estate, where white women have moved in to dominate residential sales, but people of color remain outside? Or, will it be like automobile sales today, where a few men of color do have jobs but women of all categories are largely absent? Are the industry and the occupation integrated, but in fact not the workplace and the jobs? More detailed information is usually available from the same federal agencies; however, media reports tend to focus on what are often oversimplified

summaries, overlooking how the summaries understate patterned economic differences between the sexes and among racial-ethnic groups. Thus, Table 5.2 masks the full extent of employment inequality among its four comparison groups.

When we compare the occupations that are predominantly male with those that are predominantly female, we also see differences in intrinsic rewards. Traditionally, jobs that are predominantly female have less autonomy, less decision-making power, and fewer opportunities for training and promotion. Similarly, predominantly male jobs have better extrinsic rewards—in addition to pay, jobs vary in their security and in fringe benefits, such as health coverage and pension plans. These are each related to the racial-ethnic composition of people in the occupation, as well. White men's work historically has been better paid, with more opportunities for advancement. Men of color have had, on the average, lower rates of pay, much less autonomy, fewer fringe benefits and protections, and higher rates of unemployment. When unions won better conditions, including fringe benefits and better protection in the event of job loss or retirement, the gains were generally restricted to white men. That is, unions often excluded men of color and all women from membership. Employers providing improved working conditions in an effort to forestall labor organizing also restricted these conditions by race and sex. Until the 1970s, men of color and all women were largely excluded from unionized jobs as a result of agreements between management and white men unionists (Reskin and Padavic 1994). In some occupations, individual male union members may continue to sabotage women co-workers, with little or no interference from union leaders.

Men's and women's jobs have also differed in their negative qualities. There has been a long-standing tendency to assign high-risk occupations to men. The patriarchal ideology defines men as stronger and more capable than women and paternalistically assigns men the protection of women and children. Allowing women access to these jobs, or recognizing the hazardous quality of some women-dominated jobs (such as nursing, and some women-dominated or sex integrated agricultural work with exposure to high levels of pesticides), threatens the traditional justifications of male's higher status. In addition, jobs with hazardous aspects, whether traditionally assigned to men or to women, are disproportionately performed by members of lower-status groups (Mullings 1997). Higher-status groups are typically able to avoid such work. During the Vietnam War, for example, African

American men were greatly over-represented among combat troops, especially in higher-risk infantry units. Police work, despite its glamorous depiction in the media, is a high-risk, blue-collar service job. Traditionally performed by white men, recruits have been drawn disproportionately from the working class and from lower-status ethnic groups. Regardless of its acknowledged importance and difficulty, it is not an occupation that attracts economically and educationally advantaged people. Women do both paid and unpaid hazardous work, but its hazards are rarely acknowledged (e.g., the repetitive motion injuries of data entry operators and chicken processing workers).

Recognizing the dangers of work some women do will undermine one ideological justification of patriarchy. The paramount importance of wage-earning to masculine identities and the more punitive governmental approach to unemployed able-bodied men have facilitated corporate and public policies to exclude women from high-risk jobs rather than to lower the risks of dangerous jobs (e.g., see Klein 1987 on lead exposure). Most owners and managers do not want to lower productivity by developing and implementing techniques to reduce hazards (see Clarke 1988). However, when the hazardous effects of an organization's activities cannot be limited to low-status groups, more powerful members of the community or the society may mobilize to demand changes. Otherwise, those people who don't have to do it often defend the persistence of hazardous work by saying that no one is forced to accept it. The lack of actual alternative opportunities is often ignored in such discussions.

Labor unions, which traditionally limited their organizing drives to occupations dominated by men, regularly would put a higher priority on raising pay for their members, rather than on workplace safety and health issues. This made sense, at least in the short term, when married women were expected to stay at home and entire families depended on a solitary male's earnings. The assumption that unions represented men with wives to take care of the home also explains their acceptance of undesirable working conditions, such as the rotating shift and mandatory overtime. Such common contractual features have made holding these jobs harder for mothers seeking better pay because ever-changing work schedules interfere with child care arrangements.

Home-based work has increased in the last 20 years. Women are more likely than men to do home-based work (this does not include

people who do some of their work at home, and also have a workplace). Except for white men in urban areas, home-based workers of both sexes earn less, on the average, than “on-site” workers. Compared to other employed women, those who do home-based work are more likely to be married, to have more children, to have younger children, to live in rural areas, and to be self-employed (Edwards and Field-Hendrey 1996). It appears, then, that these women are particularly in need of the flexibility that working at home provides. The home-based women accept lower wages, and are unable to unionize to improve their situation through the power of collective bargaining. They may be able to forego the fringe benefits that on-site workers are more likely to receive, if their husband has such benefits.

A person identified as self-employed may be working as an independent contractor for only one company. The job she or he does might otherwise be done by employees, who, unlike contractors, are legally free to unionize. In the late 1990s, the Perdue Poultry company was sued by a large group of African American men, whom Perdue insists are “independent contractors.” The workers argue that they are *de facto* employees and should have the rights of employees (Greenhouse 1999). Whether independent contractors work at home or on-site, they cause labor unions the same concern: the bargaining power of on-site employees is undermined if employers can turn to the services of independent contractors.

Jobs and occupations vary in the degree to which they are available full-time or part-time, whether they are seasonal or year-round, whether they provide higher pay as employees get more experience, more on-the-job training, or additional formal education. Research by sociologists and economists has established that people of color and white women continue to have less favorable work situations, along each of these dimensions, than do white men. The *extent* and particular *kinds* of inequities vary among people depending on where they are located in the intersections of race, class, and gender as well as region, age, and educational attainment (McCall 2000).

Explaining the Segregation of Occupations and Jobs

Describing the differences in “men’s” and “women’s” work is the easier part of the job. *Analyzing* the causes of these inequalities is

more complex, however, and more susceptible to the influence of differences in ideology. Nonetheless, an accurate analysis is essential to a successful strategy for reducing inequality. Given the strong U.S. value of equality, a push for change is likely when the justifications for segregation are understood and shown to be invalid.

The prevalence of cultural beliefs about what men and women can do, or can best do, is a significant factor in job segregation, affecting the behavior of job seekers and employers. Even if an applicant is willing to do a "nontraditional job," the employer may not be willing to hire her or him. Segregation is influenced by cultural beliefs about what a masculine man and a feminine woman should *want* to do. Thus, for example, if a man can show that he would be an excellent nursery school teacher, there are often questions raised about his masculinity, and perhaps his sexual preference. Indeed, until 1968 New York City did not permit men to be licensed as kindergarten or first-grade teachers.

These traditional cultural beliefs in support of segregation have many flaws. Women's exclusion from managerial work was often justified with claims of their lower educational achievement, which was simply inaccurate. Women's automatic exclusion from physically demanding jobs (such as fire fighting) is equally questionable when we find that typically there are no reviews of veteran workers to ensure the maintenance of the physical abilities required when they were first hired. It is uncommon for men to test the barriers to their entry into "women's" jobs, because these are usually lower prestige and lower paid. In this culture, few people are willing to sacrifice pay and prestige, and endure challenges to their gender identity, because of the intrinsic appeal of a job. Generally, those men who do enter traditionally women-identified jobs, such as nursing or elementary school teaching, do so in pursuit of administrative or other higher status positions in those fields, and rarely stay at the entry level for long (Williams 1992).

A second factor in creating and maintaining segregated jobs is the different experience (educational and otherwise) that individuals bring to the work force, which itself is gendered (see Chapter 3). So, the likelihood that boys take more math than girls in high school means girls are less likely to meet the minimum entrance requirement for certain training programs. Experiences girls have had caring for younger children in the family, or as babysitters, will enhance the

sense that they are capable of working with young children, while young men may feel they would be incompetent.

Third, segregation may result from past local practices that became habitual. Indeed, some corporations with locations in different regions in the United States report that certain jobs viewed by employees in one region as “women’s work” are viewed as “men’s work” by employees in another region (Kramer 1991). In contrast to such varied beliefs about which sex should do a particular job, what is stable in different places and at different historical moments is the notion that some jobs are appropriate for men and others for women.

The practical aspects of a job also have gendered implications, contributing in a fourth way to segregation. For instance, people with primary child care responsibilities (usually women) will probably not apply for a job with mandatory rotating shifts. A man who is expected to be the main breadwinner at home will not apply for a particularly low-paid job, like nursery school teacher. Not surprisingly, the good fit between family and work roles of the past makes a poor fit for desegregation if those family roles have not changed. However, a man with a wife earning a high income may decide to work as a nursery school teacher, after all. By 1996, almost a quarter of dual earner couples reported that the wife earned more than the husband (Winkler 1998).

The continued segregation of men’s blue-collar occupations is due, in part, to the declining number of such jobs. Women entering the labor force are unlikely to choose occupations with poor future prospects. More generally, seeking “nontraditional” work (jobs typically held by someone of the other sex) depends on the attractiveness of that work, in comparison to other available jobs. What constitutes attractive work and what is perceived as available will vary depending on local opportunities, patterns of race discrimination, and the financial needs of the woman. In contrast to a middle-class woman who wants to be a neurosurgeon, a working-class woman who wants to be a welder gets less support from family and friends (Kramer 1991).

Pay disparities between blue-collar, semiskilled jobs mainly held by women and those mainly held by men are often small at the entry level. But, after years of employment, the differences in raises and promotion possibilities will be greater. However, this may not be obvious to the new worker, who may not be planning to stay at that job for years anyway. Further, expectations of sexual harassment may discourage women from trying to integrate male-dominated blue-collar

jobs. Working-class women who want to improve their economic position instead often have the option of moving into higher-status women's jobs, like skilled office work. Many blue-collar women view these jobs as at least preferable to blue-collar "women's work." The lack of opportunities for advancement, the low rate of pay increases, and the growing lack of autonomy in female-dominated white-collar jobs are not well known or are not perceived as significant job characteristics because they are seen as "less dirty" than blue-collar work, and therefore are considered more feminine. Defining blue-collar jobs as undesirable and understating the short-comings of office and sales work are tendencies that aspiring working-class women share with other people in society.

Men's very slow rate of movement into predominantly women's jobs makes sense when we remember that these jobs typically have lower pay scales. In U.S. culture, the money one earns is generally considered more important than the satisfactions that come with performing a job, or the ways in which one's position facilitates other roles and outcomes. Although many men are interested in spending more time with their young children, few feel they can afford to accept jobs with lower pay or fewer hours (Gerson 1993). Even where "women's jobs" (such as nursing) pay well, the socialization of boys and men into avoiding predominantly female activities seems to keep many men out.

The practice of discrimination in hiring and promotion is last on this list, but not least. When treating men and women differently was legal and socially acceptable, it was easy to determine the role of employers in creating and perpetuating a gendered job structure. During the 30 years since the passage of equal employment legislation, and subsequent court cases establishing the seriousness with which the law must be taken, many employers have changed their practices. But those practices which directly or indirectly make it more difficult for a person to get a job because of sex are not easy to document, precisely because they are illegal.

Economists do not agree on how much of the existing segregation is due to employers' discriminatory practices, but they do universally agree that such practices explain some part of the dissimilarity in jobs held by women and men. Even today we can read about the legal settlements requiring major employers who have ignored the law to pay penalties for their discriminatory practices. For example, Texaco, which was sued for race and sex discrimination, settled after a high-

level white male executive secretly taped a leadership meeting where overtly racist and sexist comments were made. Mitsubishi settled after charges were pressed for the widespread sexual harassment of women employees in its Illinois factory. In late 1999, Boeing agreed to pay more than \$4.5 million in back pay and salary adjustments, and to institute a range of procedures to insure against pay discrimination against minority and women salaried workers and executives.

Changing the Gendering of Work

The decline in occupational and job segregation results from feminist action and pragmatic changes in corporate, group, and individual practices. By feminist action we refer to legislative initiatives and legal suits resulting in antidiscriminatory judicial rulings. Individuals and groups who have worked for such changes may not call themselves feminists; rather, they may view their actions as simply aimed to achieve the cultural value of equality. Before the 1970s wave of feminism, women and men were considered fundamentally different in ways that made it inappropriate to seek equality of treatment in the economy. Just as we would now not deem it appropriate to treat children the same way that we treat adults, men and women's differences were defined as justifying (even, perhaps, requiring) different treatment in the economy. As long as that point of view was part of the hegemonic ideology of gender, people who worked for equal rights were likely to see themselves as political activists. Now that it has become "obvious" (at least in the hegemonic ideology) that one's sex should not be taken into account in judging one's job or earning potential, people working for equal rights may avoid any political identity.

Indeed, once the broad initiatives of the 1970s occurred, many people pursued nontraditional arrangements even though they did not have particularly feminist goals or worldviews. Thus, employers trying to hire increasing numbers of workers for expanding occupations were willing to take advantage of the existence of women's growing labor force participation. Women who wanted to earn more money were ready to move into attractive nontraditional jobs, like accounting. Couples that needed two incomes, but did not want or could not afford to have a stranger care for their children, tried working different shifts. Financial needs rather than a feminist ideology led

to more involved fathering in many families (Gerson 1993). In other words, once the legal system made sex an inappropriate basis for economic treatment, previously existing constraints were often challenged for “purely practical” reasons.

Changes in laws, through legislative or judicial action, rarely make for widespread changes in behavior. With this in mind, the federal government led by President Nixon developed the requirement for affirmative action (see an extended discussion in Chapter 6). Employers dealing with the federal government would have to file plans showing how they were going to undo previous patterns of employment discrimination. Despite all the rhetoric against these programs, evidence has clearly established that affirmative action programs were an important force in the desegregation of jobs. Despite common allegations, such programs only rarely led to cases of “reverse discrimination.” Concerns that unqualified individuals would be hired ignored the fact that attention to race and sex were called for only *within the pool of qualified candidates*. White women, who outnumber men of color, benefited at least as much as did men and women of color (Reskin 1998). Whether or not labelled an affirmative action strategy, formalizing personnel practices is a significant factor contributing to the increased employment of women as managers (Reskin and McBrier 2000).

Cultural representations of a range of nontraditional workplaces on television and in the movies may also have had an impact on individuals’ perception of the possibilities available to them. As discussed in Chapter 2, although media depictions are often distorted, they often influence people’s ideas. Thus, the made-for-TV movies, situation comedies, and dramas with female characters performing nontraditional jobs may encourage women to broaden their job searches. For example, *Hill Street Blues* (in the 1980s) featured women police officers and attorneys in larger proportions than the real world. Numerous made-for-TV movies showed women taking on nontraditional blue-collar work, struggling with hostile co-workers, and triumphing in the end.

Many factors have drawn middle-class women into nontraditional work. Generally, traditional work has offered low pay and prestige relative to their educational achievements. Entry into nontraditional middle-class work (e.g., accounting, which was almost all male before the women’s movement began) involved no stigma and promised sig-

nificant improvements in rewards and working conditions over book-keeping jobs (i.e., predominantly female).

Despite any factors that have discouraged women from moving into nontraditional blue-collar work, some blue-collar jobs have become less segregated (e.g., bus drivers). Women have known about the hazards of certain occupations, and ignored dominant misperceptions of it, feeling that its positive aspects outweighed the negative. In addition, women who place a high value on economic independence are more attentive to the immediate or long-range monetary advantages of nontraditional work. Finally, cultural representations of nontraditional work (even if inaccurate) may ease women's concerns about the hostility they will encounter from co-workers, encouraging them to expect that some co-workers will support them even if hostility might occur.

When pressures from the individual level grow sufficiently strong, employers often change working conditions. During the economic boom of the late 1990s, for example, some kinds of skilled workers gained power to negotiate creative arrangements, which both men and women increasingly demand, that allow combining work and family roles in new ways. As a result, some employers are permitting **telecommuting** (i.e., working at home while using e-mail, fax, and other technologies) for one or two days per week.

Alternatives to Employment

What happens when people do not earn enough to subsist? This can happen to single individuals as well as to people living with kin. It happens when people can not find full-time employment at a living wage, when they are too old or infirm to work, or when they must stay home to care for dependent children or adults. Finally, with the need for two paychecks to keep many households out of poverty, the breakup of a marriage or other intimate domestic partnership can lead people (especially women) to turn to the government for some form of economic assistance.

A maze of programs offers various forms of public support to people, depending on how the people are categorized. People in family-based households have different kinds and levels of assistance available than do single adults. This reflects a desire to protect children from the most extreme poverty rather than any particular respect for

the situation of the adults in their homes. Many people assume that anyone who makes a real effort will be able to find work, and, in contradiction to the large numbers of "working poor," that working full-time raises people above the poverty level. For example, a major feature of the Family Support Act of 1988 is the pursuit of child support payments from absent fathers. However, this strategy is irrelevant when there are too few local jobs available for men that pay a living wage.

Although the 1970s saw a striking down of sex-specific regulations regarding public assistance, the differential treatment of categories continues to have different impacts on men and women. Ideas of how women should be treated have changed radically as middle-class mothers' increased labor force participation undermined the belief in using public funds to support "stay-at-home moms." Although economically secure parents can afford adequate paid child care, or can choose to give up a parent's earnings while raising small children, the poor no longer have that choice. The ideas have changed about what mothers should do, but the use of income transfer programs to enforce those ideas has not.

Under the new welfare system (enacted in 1996 when Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or A.F.D.C., was ended), recipients *must* participate in workfare unless they are caring for a child under one year old. Going to school does not exempt a recipient from this workfare requirement, so pursuing an education to improve one's job opportunities is difficult. People must accept any work they can find within two years, because of new time limits on receiving public assistance (two years per episode, with a lifetime limit of five years). Significantly, the time limits on receiving public assistance are being enforced but the supports promised by the law (e.g., child care, medical insurance, and Food Stamps) to facilitate the transition are often lacking (Schorr 1998).

After the first two years of the new system, recipients in the earliest wave reached their time limit. Yes, the numbers of people receiving public assistance has been drastically reduced nationally. And yes, the closed cases include individuals who did find adequate employment. Some of that group would have been glad to work earlier, but needed the medical insurance that did come with welfare, and did not come with the jobs they could find. Because the new law lets them keep these benefits for a time, they are now able to do what they wanted to do previously—work for their income (see Schorr

1998). However, staying off welfare will be difficult: the medical insurance lasts for one year only and the new jobs usually do not include insurance. Likewise, childcare benefits are limited; unless former recipients can find the money to pay for child care those with young children may have trouble holding a job after these benefits run out. Finally, the job placement rate is due in part to the current economic boom. Former recipients will be among the most vulnerable when unemployment rates return to their typically higher levels.

An intermediate category of former A.F.D.C. recipients consists of people who have had periods of both employment and unemployment during the brief time since leaving the welfare rolls. This pattern is far from economically secure and results in a very low income (they are not typically eligible for unemployment compensation from the kinds of work they have done), with minimum wage during periods of employment and no income otherwise.

In contrast to those who have left welfare for employment, a large minority of former recipients have simply "disappeared," given up on an increasingly harsh and bureaucratically demanding system even before reaching their two-year time limit. Local and regional research projects have resulted in estimates that about one quarter of the people who left welfare are in worse economic circumstances than they were while receiving welfare. Given how marginal those circumstances were, this indicates a serious problem. Thus, a study in New Jersey estimated that 27 percent are receiving no wages to replace their welfare stipends (Kocieniewski 1999). Ongoing research is examining what paths are being taken by such individuals and their families.

There is widespread, growing concern about the current and future well-being of children living with even less adequate supports than those provided by welfare (Schorr 1998). If policies are adjusted to respond to this fundamental flaw in welfare "reform," the changes are likely to be addressed to households with children. More typically headed by women, these households may get some improvement in their economic situation. The question of how to protect people who formerly were kept, by the "safety net," from an economic free-fall will be on the public agenda for the foreseeable future. Men are likely to get short shrift if they are not attached to children. However, the symbolic support offered to women with children may not help much as they face the considerable challenges of raising the next generation with insufficient resources. One extreme outcome predicted from the new laws is an increase in the number of people who are homeless.

Homelessness and Gender

The growth of homelessness is largely a result of large-scale economic developments. Individual and social problems help determine which particular people will be without housing; but even with similar problems, before the 1980s people were not so vulnerable to homelessness as they are now (for an excellent overview, see Blau 1992). Families and individuals living below the poverty line twenty-five years ago simply did not experience homelessness at the current rate. Likewise, people with drug or alcohol addictions, or serious mental illness were not at today's risk of homelessness. The growth in homelessness is due to the declining number of privately owned, low-cost housing units, the astronomical increase in real estate values and rents, government abandonment of the construction of public housing, the growing proportion of the population working in low-wage jobs, and the declining buying power of the minimum wage. Another factor adding to the size of the problem is the change, starting in the early 1970s, of treating the mentally ill with medications rather than long-term hospitalization (which usually did not include therapy, but did provide shelter). Each of these factors is, itself, the result of a complex set of social and economic shifts.

The *relative* influence of each of the foregoing factors, as well as the size of the homeless population itself, is hotly debated. It is in many homeless people's interest to not be identified as such (e.g., mothers may lose custody of their children, employers may fire workers), and so official counts are unreliable. Social support for homeless people is generally locally based, and differs widely from one city and region to another. According to recent estimates, during one year, between 700,000 and two million people are homeless nationally (Kilborn 1999). Even if the most cautious of these estimates is accurate, homelessness and fear of homelessness are significant aspects of contemporary U.S. life.

Homelessness is gendered in important ways. First, vulnerability to it results from one's economic situation; and, as we have seen, the economic situations of people are gendered—women earn less than men, are more likely to be working part-time rather than full-time, and may be more constrained by child care needs than are men. When men leave, women's wages may not pay the rent or the mortgage payment, not to mention other household expenses. Many women become homeless because they have left a violent home and

have no place to go, or have had only temporary shelter with relatives or friends.

In addition, the available services for homeless people reflect how the society defines men and women, their family obligations, their capacities, and their needs. Many homeless shelters were originally designed with single individuals, rather than family units including children, in mind. Homeless women are more likely than homeless men to be caring for their children. The particular difficulties of homelessness also vary for individual men and women. Women are more vulnerable to sexual assault, may have to manage menstruation-related hygiene, and often have a greater sense of physical modesty in U.S. culture. Finally, among the non-homeless, awareness of the problem is distorted. The public may be more aware of homeless men because we are more afraid of them and they are more visible. Homeless women may make great efforts to be invisible in order to protect themselves and their children from street crime.

Among white men, homelessness is more likely than for other population groups to be associated with psychological difficulties, because for white men without such problems, making a living wage is less difficult than for women, as a group, and men of color. In the latter groups, psychological and substance abuse problems appear to characterize a smaller proportion of homeless people.

These patterns are more complex than generally thought: the path to homelessness may not include psychological problems, but homelessness may itself produce such problems. If one has been homeless for a while, it would be hard not to become psychologically disturbed, and not to seek relief through drugs or alcohol. Liebow (1993) described the lives of women in several shelters in the Washington, D.C., area in the 1980s. Getting through each day was a challenge: where to spend the day, where to eat, how to safeguard one's possessions, how to arrange medical or employment-related appointments without revealing one's lack of residence. Religious faith was an important support for many of the homeless women he got to know.

Although shelter space in most communities is more available for single individuals than for adults with children, it is usually of worse quality. In part, this reflects the greater prevalence of single individuals in the early years of the homelessness era. But it also reflects sexist beliefs about men and their independence. As long as a man has only himself to support, there is culturally no acceptable explanation of his

homelessness— he must be to blame. So, the *quality* of shelter space for men is likely to be worse than for women, and especially for mothers with children. We more readily accept women's dependence and we may be reluctant to punish children for the perceived failures of a parent. However, higher standards for family shelters mean they cost more, and fewer have been made available. Even though public sentiments are with families and women, their lesser visibility reduces public pressure for providing the shelter they need.

Although men may more easily find shelter, it may be more dangerous than arrangements made for women (whether individuals or with families). Further, men's housing in public shelter appears to be enough of a solution, in policy maker's eyes. By contrast, there is more pressure to regard shelters as a temporary solution for women in families, and more interest in developing permanent housing alternatives for them. This varies, too, with regional differences in views of the poor and views of the role of government in helping individuals in crisis (Blau 1992).

Explaining Gendered Economics

A theoretical perspective is useful if it helps explain, or make sense of, a wide variety of our observations. The feminist perspectives introduced in Chapter 1 contribute different insights to understanding the gendering of economic life in the contemporary United States. Radical feminism and socialist feminism share an insistence that the economic position of individuals and of social categories will have an enormous influence on the power those individuals have in all areas of social life. A radical feminist approach emphasizes patriarchy's dominance in the culture and men's shared interest in keeping themselves in the relatively advantaged position that is inherent in patriarchy. According to this approach, women's contributions are devalued and go unrecognized even when their value is undeniable. For men to reward women economically would cause them to lose control over women, individually and collectively. Radical and socialist feminists share the idea that men retain power over the women with whom they live as long as patterned employment discrimination against women persists (Hartmann 1976).

Radical feminism presumes a commonality among women of all classes and racial ethnic groups that does not ring true to most

women in disadvantaged classes and racial ethnic groups. In particular, the men with whom many racial, ethnic, or economically disadvantaged women share membership in low-status categories are not prime figures in women's oppression. An exclusive focus on gender stratification significantly oversimplifies economic realities.

Neither does radical feminism account for experiences of young people in the top tier of the stratification system, which has become increasingly affluent. Young women from the upper middle class and the upper class have left school with credentials to match their male peers and have been more successful than less-educated women, who have sought traditionally male blue-collar jobs. When these affluent young women marry and when older women of affluent marriages return to school and earn comparable credentials, their households achieve significantly higher standards of living. Even though such women often experience sex discrimination on the job, they are financially secure enough to survive divorce economically. Indeed, women's employment outside the home has been "blamed" for women's greater willingness to end unsuccessful marriages.

The liberal feminist perspective, in turn, stresses the influence of cultural beliefs about men and women's abilities and rightful responsibilities in the family. Individual choice, stemming from socialization experiences, reproduces dominant social patterns. For example, the modern version of separate spheres may lead a woman to avoid a job that pays better than her husband's. Socialization of employers and customers serves to limit the choices of would-be employees who are interested in "sex-inappropriate" work. For example, if parents believe that women are more nurturant than men, they may prefer to send their children to a day care center in which women are employed rather than men.

Even during a period of social change, the liberal feminist position provides insights by focusing on individuals' socialization and resocialization. For example, employers often limited women to dead-end jobs because they believed women's commitment to work was not equal to men's. Decades of growing evidence to the contrary should be eliminating this concern of employers, and may be contributing to the slow but steady desegregation of occupations described earlier in the chapter. The most distinctively liberal factor is a focus on the need to change rules and educate people, yet there is little awareness of the obstacles that might remain or even develop as groups that see themselves losing resources try to stop the change that new rules

and education aim for. The reality of improvement along some dimensions and for some women suggests that education and socialization have a part to play, but the slow rate and limited extent of those improvements suggest that power differences among groups cannot be ignored.

Socialist feminists often examine social life for ways in which patriarchal beliefs divide groups that might otherwise unite and unseat the powerful through coalition. This helps to explain the cooperation of white men labor unionists with management to keep men of color and women out of the better jobs. The gendering of wages (even where identical work was done by both sexes) enabled men to retain power in their family relationships by virtue of their greater economic resources (Hartmann 1976). Similarly, a socialist feminist perspective helps us understand why the occupations that have shrunk have been least open to the participation of women. Men whose jobs are in jeopardy are hostile to the entry of people who have traditionally worked for lower wages. Socialist feminists study how differences among men (in their power and other resources) help to explain the different ways in which men exploit women. Thus, they argue that stratification among men is an essential part of the contemporary system of patriarchy; analyses of the economy require attention to men's differential positions.

Like socialist feminism, multiracial feminists view power as the central explanation for stratification patterns. The multiracial feminist position is most able to account for what we have described, because it emphasizes the differences among both women and men related to social class and racial-ethnic identities. Thus, while women share the experience of job and occupational segregation across racial and ethnic groups, racial and ethnic groups differ in unemployment rates and even labor force participation rates for married women. Further, the extent of the differences and similarities have changed in varying ways over recent decades. The multiracial feminist argues against generalizing, and for paying attention to the ways that the intersection of statuses plays itself out at particular moments and for particular intersections.

This resistance to generalization is consistent with the argument that there is a multiplicity of femininities and masculinities. The form that is hegemonic, or dominant, at some historical moment will be related to the structure of the economy. Thus, Connell describes economically hopeless Australian men who have stopped believing they must be the primary breadwinner to be masculine. This move makes

sense; their lack of opportunities would make the hegemonic, breadwinning masculinity an impossibility. Instead, some have adopted an alternative masculinity—which Connell calls “live fast and die young” (1995). Athletic achievers in the United States are likely to give up dreams of professional sports if they have access to achieving hegemonic masculinity by providing a very comfortable home and other material assets through more conventional work. Lower-class athletes and athletes of color are more apt to pursue professional sports careers, despite the long odds and high physical costs, because the odds are apparently even worse for their economic success through “normal” avenues. Achievement through climbing the corporate ladder conforms to our society’s dominant definition of adult manliness. Where achieving economically through a white-collar route seems remote, alternatives to hegemonic manliness are pursued.

Much media attention is paid to the existence of people of color in the young and affluent segment of the population, although the numbers of such people are actually quite small. For these nontraditional categories of high earners, the gap between them and the other members of their gender and racial ethnic categories is wider than ever. Still, the consequences for the gendering of the economy remain to be discovered. The multiracial approach appears the most promising for understanding this and other processes in our rapidly changing economic realities.

Summary

It is easy to see the important effects of economic arrangements on the quality of life. However, the extent of economic stratification by gender is usually underestimated. It is also justified by patriarchal ideology. Aspects of U.S. capitalist ideology, such as the belief in the ability to “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” regardless of external limits on opportunities, lead to the invisibility of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, and age against women and members of other groups.

Nonetheless, as labor force participation has become normative for white women, many have become aware of the existence of gender stratification (joining women of color in that awareness). Although some aspects of economic circumstance are not gendered—for example, men’s and women’s unemployment rates are comparable within racial ethnic categories—other aspects, including occupa-

tions, rate of pay, and kinds of public welfare, are clearly gendered (Steinberg 2001).

The chapter started with a review of the “new economy.” One of the most significant factors of that economy is the increasing earning gap between the individuals at the top of the earnings hierarchy and those in the middle and below. This phenomenon is true for women and for men (Bernstein and Mischel 1997). Indeed, most of the shrinking difference in wage inequality between men and women has resulted from the stagnation or even decrease in earnings of low-wage male workers, rather than from women “catching up” to men’s earnings levels. This is consistent with the socialist feminist focus on capitalism and the importance of the economic interests rather than the ideological beliefs of employers in the shaping of occupational and wage structures.

Multiracial feminists demand more careful and complete attention to numerous dimensions of economic experience, arguing against simpler and more intellectually “elegant” models that emphasize only one or two dimensions and pay little or no attention to the variations that characterize their intersections. Future feminist research in the sociology of work and the economy will certainly make use of the multiracial perspective as it successfully “makes sense” of a growing body of evidence.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the many dimensions along which jobs and careers can differ, and the ways in which they tend to do so, depending on one’s sex, racial-ethnic group, and one’s social class.
2. Imagine that you have just been appointed Secretary of Labor. What particular goals would you set as you aim to decrease gender inequality in the economy? Propose strategies to reach your goals.
3. If men and women are to have equality in the quality of their lives, what changes are called for in the welfare system, and other governmental programs for the economically vulnerable?

The Political and Legal System

The political system provides people with a stable social structure and a point from which they can act as agents to change the structure. It includes government, oriented toward the maintenance of internal order and external defense, and all other activities aimed at changing or maintaining power arrangements in the society. In its regulation of organizations and individuals and its allocation of resources and responsibilities, government influences and sometimes dictates personal decisions and actions. However, diversity of beliefs and lifestyles among the population are not always supported by public policy. In fact, agencies of government may undo or preclude agreements negotiated by family and economic units. For example, because nearly all state governments refuse to recognize same-sex couples as domestic partners, they cannot depend, as a unit, on health or other fringe benefits that are available to their married fellow employees. Nonetheless, in many instances, the government and non-governmental groups respect the rights of families and work organizations to choose their own ways of functioning even though public policies may be undermined. Thus, employers in regions where the federal judiciary is hostile to equal employment opportunity have implemented the Family and Medical Leave Act more slowly than employers in other regions of the United States (Guthrie and Roth 1999).

The dominant social meanings of gender will always be those that are backed by the force of government policies and agencies. In this

section, we will survey the ways government shapes the gendering of social life and the ways government backing is affected by non-governmental ideas and actions related to gender. The focus will be on economic, cultural, and change-oriented group influences on government. In particular, we will examine the development and impact of the Women's Movement, and more narrowly focused activism against rape, domestic violence, and inequities in the workplace.

Social control is exercised through civil and criminal law in the regulation of organizational, small group, and individual behavior. Many behaviors are unrestricted by laws or rules. This lack of restrictions implicitly shows their social acceptability, or a lack of consensus about them. Some of the most significant work for changing the gender system has aimed at changing the *acceptable* to the *unacceptable*, and making the taken-for-granted visible and problematic. For example, marital rape and sexual harassment have only recently been formally recognized as phenomena. Marital rape did not exist legally because husbands were defined as always having a right to sex whether or not their wives wanted sex. Likewise, the kinds of behaviors currently included in sexual harassment have been viewed as normal aspects of social life, socially acceptable even if not socially desirable. Historically, the legal institution has given "green light" to a fundamental vehicle for husbands' domination of wives and male workers' and supervisors' domination of women on the job.

Government programs affecting income transfer also exercise social control, as we saw in Chapter 5. This means that some individuals and groups are defined as deserving tax breaks or subsidies, and others are deemed ineligible. The differential treatment of people who have been put into separate categories and channeled into separate government programs implicitly reflects and enforces dominant gender ideology, punishing those who do not conform. Here, too, significant changes have occurred in the decades since the beginning of the second wave of feminism. For example, in the 1970s a widower was not entitled to survivor's benefits from the Social Security Administration if he chose to stay home to take care of a small child, although a widow was so entitled. The law was based on the assumption that widowed women had lost the family breadwinner, but that widowed men had not. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who later became the second woman ever appointed to the United States Supreme Court, effectively argued that a man should not be denied survivor's benefits on the basis of sex.

Both existing formal rules and their enforcement are gendered. Further, the long record of judicial and enforcement agencies shows that apparently similar cases are often treated inconsistently, related to the intersection of gender, class, race, and ethnicity of the parties in question. Inconsistency in treatment is tied to both the social position of the alleged law-breaker(s) and the social position of those who are the object of that behavior.

This inequality in legal treatment has long been recognized in rape cases. For instance, men accused of raping women from their own social class and race are treated far more leniently than those accused of raping women of a higher social class, and men of color who are accused of raping white women. White men who rape women of color, or lower class women than themselves, are treated most leniently.

Political Life Is Dynamic

In saying that government exists to promote and protect the common good, the central role of ideology is made explicit. Ideas and values about what is the common good are represented in the laws and policies of a society. However, these ideas and values may not represent a consensus, because access to political power and influence is not equally distributed. When there is an absence of consensus, those with less power and influence will probably find that their views are not supported governmentally.

Power and influence sometimes appear unexpectedly, when coalitions are formed that put together otherwise powerless individuals and groups. Policies are susceptible to the mobilization of groups eager to change the status quo as well as to competing groups interested in maintaining that status quo. Social and political changes occur despite the edge held by those whose views are supported by government regulation.

Policies also change in more conventional ways through the gradual shifting of legislative, judicial, and executive perspectives influenced by the more institutionalized routes of the ballot box and the purse strings. The low number of women in law-making, interpreting, and enforcing agencies has long indicated women's relative political powerlessness. It also helps explain the sexism in traditional law and the slow pace of change relative to changes in public attitudes.

The United States Congress has consistently had lower percentages of women than the legislatures of many other industrialized nations. Rather than a simple explanation focused on voter attitudes, analysts emphasize the structure of electoral systems (Norris 1987). For example, countries differ in the relative power of the “selectorate” (i.e., those who influence the choice of names to come before the electorate). The more power within the *party* to shape the choices given to the voters, the fewer women candidates will be chosen. After Elizabeth Dole ended her historical candidacy for the 2000 Republican Presidential nomination, some party strategists explained her lack of support as symptomatic of women’s preference for male candidates (Dowd 1999). This presumption by party leaders is used to justify the underrepresentation of women as candidates.

If the party leadership and potential financial contributors believe that even women voters won’t support a woman, a woman candidate will find it more difficult than a man to receive a party’s nomination. Thus, the ideological bias (i.e., political strategists’ beliefs about what women candidates can accomplish and about how women voters will behave) has an effect because of the social structure of election campaigns (i.e., the way that people are selected to be their party’s nominees). In the contemporary United States, the costs of running a successful campaign have skyrocketed, even within a ten year period. Without campaign finance reform (another social structural issue), the biases of campaign donors can effectively remove nonconforming candidates from serious consideration.

The representation of women on the national level in the United States continues to increase slowly (see Table 6.1). As of 1999, the U.S. Congress was only 12.1 percent female (with 12.9 percent of the House of Representatives and 9 percent of the Senate). Women of color have made their greatest inroads in local and state offices, (see for example, Darling 1998). Although women of color comprise more than a quarter of all women in Congress, all nine women senators are white.

The trends in Table 6.1 can be interpreted as change at a snail’s pace, or it can be seen as showing a slow but inexorable movement (like the tortoise). For example, we can say the female proportion of Congress more than doubled in the 1989–99 period, or we can say it grew by less than 10 percent. We can say accurately that women state legislators are almost one-quarter of all state legislators. We can also say that the rate of increase is slowing, and if this rate of increase con-

tinues to decline, it will be a very long time before women are represented in proportion to their numbers in the population.

Table 6.1
*Women In Public Office, 1969-1999**

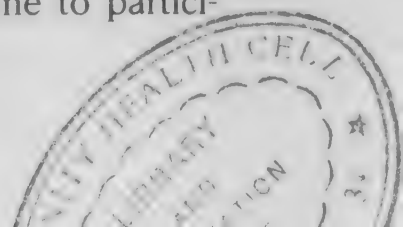
Women as a Percentage of All Office Holders				
	1969	1979	1989	1999
U.S. House of Representatives	2%	3%	6%	13%
U.S. Senate	1%	1%	2%	9%
Statewide Offices	7%	11%	14%	28%
State Legislatures	4%	10%	17%	22%

*Sources: Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Fact Sheets 9/99. Office of the Historian of the United States House of Representatives, *Women in Congress 1917-1990*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991.

Office holding by women increased first at local and state levels, with Congressional representation picking up speed only recently. In addition to the benefit of smaller financial requirements for running a local or state-wide campaign, the practical problems of holding elective office while fulfilling the roles of wife or mother are more manageable without a long-distance commute. As more families have come to expect wives to have a strong commitment to work, the perception of family obligations as an obstacle has probably declined.

Predicting future patterns is a risky venture, because single issues may crystallize activists for change or reaction against change. For example, a political demonstration for stronger gun control, the "Million Mom March" on Mother's Day 2000, may be the first step for a political career for grassroots organizers. The implicit message of the organizers is that mothers have a special interest in ending gun violence (although "honorary moms"—men—were welcome to partici-

WH-180



pate). If the logic of this appeal is followed through, campaigns for women candidates may return to the ideology that women will have a moral edge as political participants, which was one of the original arguments suffragists used to win women's right to vote. Obviously, there are a lot of "ifs" here—which is precisely the point. Things happen and have unanticipated consequences, such as the 1991 Hill-Thomas hearings (described in Chapter 1), which undoubtedly help account for the jump in congressional representation of women in the early 1990s. During and soon after the Clinton impeachment hearings, many political analysts predicted that women candidates would have a future advantage because of the continuing belief in women's superior sexual morality.

In this episode, it was clear that the media did not only reflect the news, but influenced it. Candidates (and political office holders with plans for future elections) depend in part on media coverage for reaching voters and donors. Politicians trying to develop support for particular policy changes also benefit from appropriate media coverage. Research on reporters' coverage of women candidates and congresswomen indicates, however, that audiences learn about women's actions on "women's" issues but that the involvement and leadership of congresswomen in other areas is underreported (Carroll and Schreiber 1997).

Talk radio has become a significant political force, giving voice to and further encouraging hostility toward a caricatured version of feminism (such as Rush Limbaugh's popularization of the term *feminazi*) (Levit 1998). The format, content, and tone of talk radio, rather than the medium of radio itself, has attracted a predominantly male audience (Kohut and Parker 1997). The World Wide Web is the latest, very powerful medium for spreading information and misinformation, and for opening discussion up to many voices. They may choose, however, to listen only to others with similar views. This has become not only a medium for the spread of dangerous information (e.g., related to the construction of bombs and formulae for the date-rape drug), but also a place to organize activists for feminist change. Many sites that proclaim themselves vehicles for improving the quality of women's lives, however, merely use the notion of "women's culture" as a way to sell products and services (Prose 2000).

It has been traditional to define political participation narrowly, focusing on party politics and voting behavior. This overlooks grass-

roots activity as well as the impact of economic interests on the political process. Formal activities, such as voting in primaries and general elections, and informal activities have contributed to changes in women's and men's opportunities and responsibilities through the enactment of new laws, changes in policies shaping the execution or enforcement of laws, and in taking to court practices and laws that have not yielded to change through legislation. Figure 6.1 presents some of the many historical moments that have changed the meaning of gender in the United States.

Feminist Activism: The Right to Vote

Social movements, broad-based efforts from outside the political institution, have been a significant force for changes throughout U.S. history. The feminist movement itself is a leading example of a force effecting basic changes in society. The first wave of feminist action in the United States started before the Civil War, in the mid-nineteenth century. Although best known for its aim to win the vote for women, first wave activists worked for other rights as well, such as the right of married women to own property. The abolitionist challenge to inequalities among people on the basis of race led to challenges of inequalities on the basis of sex. Women's active participation and leadership in the abolition movement itself undermined beliefs about women's nature and the limits in it that justified women's lack of rights under the law. The conditions of enslaved women's lives clearly challenged notions of women's weakness.

The momentum of women's rights activism was weakened during and after the Civil War. A resurgence of feminism, started in 1890, and the struggle for the vote continued until 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified. The participation of women in the war efforts (World War I) was rewarded with the vote. Feminist activism decreased after that achievement. Some supporters saw their goal achieved, and a lack of consensus among others about the next targets for improving women's rights led to a splintering of movement organizations (see Davidson and Gordon 1979).

Figure 6.1*Pursuing Gender Equity in the U.S. Political and Legal System:
Examples of Large and Small Steps and Obstacles*

1848	Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention.
1855	FIRST married woman recorded as keeping her own name (Lucy Stone). Others who followed this practice were called "Lucy Stoners."
1866	FIRST constitutional definition of "citizens" and "voters" as "male," in the 14th Amendment.
1870	FIRST women served on juries (in the Wyoming Territory).
1888	New York suffragists won passage of a law requiring women doctors for women patients in mental institutions.
1893	FIRST state (Colorado) adopted a state amendment enfranchising women.
1900	Two-thirds of divorce cases were initiated by the wife; a century earlier, most had no right to sue for divorce.
1913	Suffragists parading in Washington, D.C., drew people away from President Wilson's arrival in the city. Suffragists were mobbed by abusive crowds.
1917	FIRST woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (Jeannette Rankin of Montana).
1920	African American women were unable to register to vote in most Southern states because of property tax requirements and other obstacles (already used to disenfranchise African American men).
1933	FIRST woman in a Presidential cabinet (Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor).
1945	The Equal Pay for Equal Work bill (first introduced in 1872) failed in Congress. It passed in 1963.
1957	FIRST election in which approximately equal numbers of women and men voted.
1968	EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) ruled that unless employers can show a bona fide occupational qualification exists, sex-segregated help wanted newspaper ads are illegal.
1972	In <i>Eisenstadt v. Baird</i> the Supreme Court rules that the right to privacy encompasses an unmarried person's right to use contraceptives.
1981	FIRST woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court (Sandra Day O'Connor).
1984	FIRST woman candidate on a major party's Presidential slate (Geraldine Ferraro).
1991	Sexual harassment became a household term, due to Anita Hill's testimony during U.S. Senate confirmation hearings on the nomination of Justice Thomas to the Supreme Court.
1993	The Family and Medical Leave Act was signed into law, giving job protection, under limited circumstances, to men and women who temporarily cannot work because of family care obligations.

Sources: The National Women's History Project timeline at: <http://www.legacy98.org/timeline.html>. Evans, Sara M. 1998. "American Women in a New Millenium." In *The American Woman 1999-2000*, ed. C. Costello, S. Miles, and A. Stone. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 45-101.

The Second Wave

Like the first wave, the “women’s movement,” or the “second wave” of feminist activism, grew out of women’s participation in other political change activities. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s led to a questioning of the inequities between women and men. Young activist women in the civil rights and then the anti-Vietnam War movements challenged the sexist practices of men in their organizations. Their feminist activism came to be called “women’s liberation” because of its emphasis on freeing women from the many informal and interpersonal, as well as the formal, constraints on their achievements of equality.

The political establishment itself contributed to the development of the second wave. President Kennedy, following up his 1960 campaign pledge, established a National Commission on the Status of Women. Its report was published in 1963 and helped create momentum for change. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibited unequal pay for people doing the same work, although it did not prohibit discrimination that prevents people from doing the same work. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, motivated principally to undo race discrimination. Its list of prohibited bases for discrimination also included sex. Ironically, women’s rights were in this law as part of a strategy to defeat the legislation in Congress. Introduced in seriousness by one of the few women in the House of Representatives, Martha Griffith of Michigan, it was allowed to remain in the bill when conservative Senator Howard K. Smith of Virginia supported the language. He knew that voting against an antiracial discrimination bill would be too politically dangerous, but expected members of Congress to use the inclusion of women to justify their votes against the proposal. His expectation was wrong, and the bill passed both houses and was signed into law.

One of the many recommendations of the National Commission on the Status of Women was the formation of such commissions in each state. The National Organization for Women (N.O.W.) was formed by a group of prominent women who met while attending a National Conference on State Commissions on the Status of Women. This segment of the second wave, the “women’s rights” branch, focused on changes in political and legal arrangements.

The Women’s Movement quickly gathered momentum with the rapid spread of “consciousness raising” groups, particularly among

younger white women, and the pursuit of changes through legislation and litigation by organizations representing older, and usually affluent, white women. It occurred in a period when activism seemed normal, and many people believed in the potential for improving people's lives through governmental action. Whether radical or reformist, action took many forms, with multiple targets for change.

Based on differences in both the means and the ends advocated by participants in the second wave, Ferree and Hess (1985) identified four different perspectives. **Career feminists** envisioned freeing individuals from sexism through personal transformation. Liberal feminists shared the goal of freeing individuals from sexism, but disagreed with career feminists on the means to that end. Liberal feminists believed sociopolitical changes would be necessary means for achieving individual freedom. Both radical feminists and socialist feminists had new, nonsexist communities as their common goal, but differed on the means to that end. Radical feminists emphasized personal transformation, via cultural transformation. In contrast, socialist feminists, like liberal feminists, considered sociopolitical changes the necessary means, according to Ferree and Hess.

Each variety of feminism made distinctive contributions to the movement's accomplishments and to the positive character of feminism's diversity. Thus, successful career feminists helped develop a base of support for further progress. Liberal feminists led the push toward women's equal participation as politicians, judges, and other policy makers. Radical feminists drew attention to the myriad of ways that the culture endorses and reinforces sexist assumptions and behaviors. Socialist feminists emphasized the importance of social class, race, and other dimensions of difference that prevented people from achieving equality.

Starting early in the second wave, feminists aimed at ratification of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A.) to the United States Constitution (see page 157). First proposed in Congress soon after women achieved voting rights, and reintroduced to session after session of Congress, the proposal had never been voted out of committee to the floor. In 1970, Judiciary Committee review was bypassed with a petition, signed by a majority of members of the House of Representative, to bring the bill to the floor. It was quickly ratified in the House, and overwhelmingly passed in the Senate, and 30 of the 38 states ratified it within a year of receiving it from the Congress.

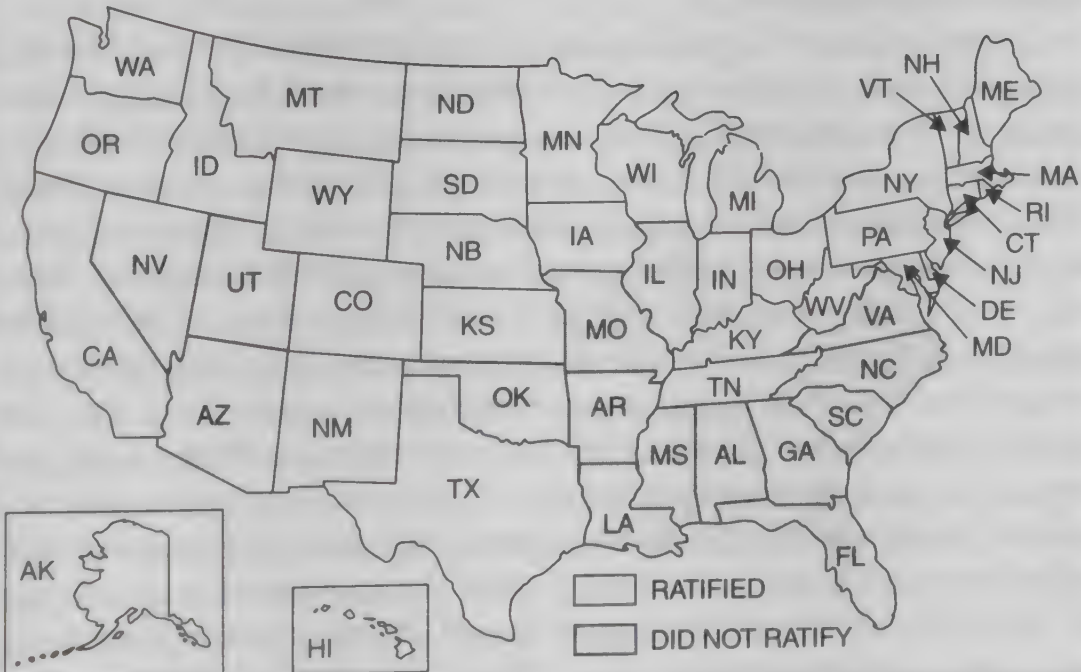
Proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Milestones in the History of the E.R.A.

- 1923** First introduced in Congress.
- 1970** Brought to the floor of the House of Representatives, as a result of a petition by members. (Never voted out of the House Judiciary Committee). Passed by the House of Representatives with a vote of 350 to 15.
- 1972** Passed by the Senate with a vote of 84 to 8.
- 1972–1973** Thirty state legislatures ratified the E.R.A.
- 1974** Three more states ratified.
- 1975** One state ratified.
- 1977** The thirty fifth state (Indiana) ratified.
- 1979** The original deadline for state ratification was reached, three states short of the necessary number. Congress voted an extension to 1982.
- 1982** No additional states having ratified the proposed amendment, it failed.

States Ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A.)



Despite its apparently simple and straightforward language, as time passed a movement against it gathered steam, alleging all sorts of dire results should it be ratified. Thus, it became viewed as increasingly radical as it awaited passage in the states that were the most conservative. As the map reveals, Southern and Mormon state legislators were unwilling to support the E.R.A. (Mansbridge 1986).

Gradually, debates over the priority of the E.R.A.'s passage on "the" feminist agenda clarified the existence of different goals among women (and men) who were committed to feminist change. As the struggle to get ratification in the necessary number of states lengthened, increasing numbers of people questioned the use of resources of time and money for its passage (including the campaign for the Congressional legislation to extend the deadline for state ratification). Other arenas needed action to improve women's lives, related to different views of both the goals and the means for their achievement. In addition, serious conflict developed about how feminist activism (most notably, by N.O.W.) should be related to the burgeoning, and rapidly changing, movement for lesbian rights (Adam 1995). Presenting their concerns as pragmatically based on the negative impact of public perceptions of feminists as lesbian, some leaders (such as Betty Friedan) argued against incorporating lesbian concerns in feminist action. Certainly, some people taking this position were motivated as well by their own homophobia. The argument that lesbian rights belonged low on the list of N.O.W.'s priorities itself can be interpreted as homophobic.

Combined with a growing awareness of difference within and among feminist organizations, the fight about the E.R.A. was a major source of fragmentation of the second wave. Nonetheless, it had a transforming impact on many aspects of life in the United States. Most important, it has changed what people take for granted about the relations between the sexes, and the use of one's biological sex to limit one's opportunities and responsibilities. The wide-ranging inequalities that remain are undeniable, as is the slow rate of change. But so are many of feminism's accomplishments. Thus, the *first* woman was elected governor in her own right in 1974; there had been four women governors earlier—widows of two governors, and wives of two governors prevented from reelection by term limits. Attitudes have changed. For example, many people objected to the goal of "Equal Pay For Equal Work" in the 1960s because they assumed that men had greater financial needs and should be paid more. The

belief in equal pay for equal work is now widely accepted. A broad range of changes took place in a quarter of a century—in contrast, the women's struggle for suffrage took three quarters of a century to succeed.

Many upper- and middle-class white feminists have been socially and economically secure, in comparison to women of color, economically marginal women, and lesbians (Christensen 1997). As a result, they tended to focus more or less exclusively on the inequality associated with sex alone. This has led to different priorities for action in the predominantly white groups in the movement and in feminist organizations among women of color. For example, white, middle-class feminist activists may emphasize eliminating the glass ceiling blocking upper middle- and upper-class women from reaching the very highest professional and managerial positions. Working-class white feminists and feminists of color may emphasize the "sticky floor" that prevents people from moving out of the low-level dead-end jobs into which they were initially hired; or they may make the development of sufficient, affordable, quality child care a high priority.

The media have presented contemporary feminism as a monolithic movement (Huddy 1997; Costain et al. 1997). But the media have failed to recognize and report the diversity of feminist issues and the diversity of feminists and feminist organizations. News stories are **framed**: they are put in a particular context, which gives a particular way of making sense of the facts of the story, and they may guide the reporter to exclude other facts that don't make sense within that context (Norris 1997). Furthermore, the choice of frame may be unconscious to the reporter and editor (who see it as the *obvious* way to tell the story). Clearly, what makes sense or is obvious to a person will vary; indeed, some things this book treats as obvious may have struck you as controversial, or incredible. Stories about feminism and feminists in the media tend to assume that the dominant views of feminism are accurate and relate the facts within those views.

With the integration of news media organizations (along sex, race, and class dimensions), the taken-for-granted views of reporters are expected to change. Although the total numbers of women in news organizations has increased, evidence indicates that their choices of frames have not been significantly different, although their choices of stories have been broader (Mills 1997). However, the rate of racial and ethnic integration has been extremely slow (Weaver 1997). The underrepresentation of women of color has contributed to the lack of

reporting on feminist consciousness and action among African American, Latina, and Asian American women. Finally, news staffs actually have become less diverse in social class backgrounds as most reporters now come out of college rather than working their way up from clerical positions in the organizations. Important white working-class women's activism has been also been overlooked in media representations.

If one takes the multiracial feminist perspective that individuals' oppression results from the multiple systems of domination (Lorber 1998), the emphasis on gender issues by many feminists renders them part of the problem of domination. Many women of color and economically marginal women of all racial-ethnic groups have had little interest in white-dominated feminist organizations because of this combination of prioritizing goals according to white middle-class interests, and frequently casting men-in-general as the enemy (hooks 1984). Many African American writers and some other feminists have adopted the term **womanist** to describe a perspective that simultaneously focuses on race-ethnicity, class, and gender in the struggle for all people's liberation. A womanist perspective looks at sex inequality but also seeks the improvement of men's lives (Collins 1990). That is, the influence of an oppressive race and class system on men's behavior is emphasized at the same time as the oppressive treatment of women by men of their own class, race, or ethnic group.

Feminist thought and action developed rapidly among Latina and African American women and more slowly among Asian Americans (Chow 1987). Activists developed ideologies that best fit their experiences and concerns. Women from different racial-ethnic groups differed in some of the issues they confronted; further, each category is more heterogeneous than even these umbrella terms suggest. But they all had to deal with the tensions between their feminist views and their racial-ethnic movement. Sometimes they faced accusations of disloyalty for embracing feminist ideas and generally they faced marginalizing by white feminist activists (Garcia 1989).

The Third Wave

During the 1990s, young feminists started calling themselves "the third wave," referring to their generation as distinct from those who participated in the "second wave." Third wave feminists grew up dur-

ing the 1980s and 1990s backlash against the women's liberation movement. The achievements and issues of women's liberation are now taken for granted, rather than being controversial. Instead, the "third wave" has moved its focus to new challenges opened up by the greater freedoms achieved by the "second wave" (Krebs 1998). For example, maintaining a career and developing relationships of partnership or parenting or both are not viable unless one is superwoman.

Third wave feminists have also grown up hearing about the importance of differences among women, and are more likely than their second-wave counterparts to focus on concerns about economic, cultural, and sexual inequalities among women of different classes, ethnicities, sexualities, and nationalities. Finally, third wave feminists are often concerned with issues of sexual exploitation, violence, and the increasing prevalence of health problems stemming from increasingly abnormal cultural demands of thinness for young women (Brumberg 1997). Third wave feminists are also more comfortable with cultural symbols that older feminists consider degrading to women. Younger feminists may see themselves sabotaging sexist symbols by taking them over and using them ironically, or using them to gain attention for radical messages (*The Righteous Babes* 1998).

Men's Activism

Many men have engaged in confronting sexism in U.S. society. Early in the second wave of the women's movement, the men's movement consisted of groups aimed at helping eliminate sexism (see, for example, Farrell 1975). More recently, men's activism has come to include pro-feminist and antifeminist branches. Some groups focus on protecting men from anti-male practices perceived as flowing from feminist action.

Featured in cover stories in major news magazines, Susan Faludi's 1999 book, *Stiffed*, reports on the tough position in which working men in the contemporary United States find themselves. Regardless of political standpoint, analysts of men's positions agree that masculinity is in crisis. However, while it is popular to blame the crisis on women's growing equality, leading socialist feminist and multiracial feminist social scientists (e.g., Michael Kimmel and R.W. Connell) highlight the changing political economy, including the erosion of

U.S. political and economic hegemony internationally. Thus, as we saw in Chapter 5, it is largely the erosion of working men's economic conditions that has brought them closer to women's situation, rather than enormous gain in women's circumstances.

Consistent with distortions in media coverage of other gender-related issues, the media have also underreported the economic and social factors eroding men's situations. Indeed, while Faludi's book was widely reported, most reviews and discussions coming out of its publication largely ignored her assessment of the importance of the changing economy. Instead, the media focused more or less exclusively on women's advances as causing men's loss of status.

Some men's rights activists have also focused on eliminating traditional arrangements that are unfair to men, such as the almost automatic granting of custody to mothers in contested divorces through the mid- to late-twentieth century. Other groups focus on men's psychological pain, most prominently with weekend retreats to the woods to facilitate getting in touch with one's real self.

The Promise Keepers, a Christian organization, flourished in the late 1990s (Kimmel 1997). It used large rallies around the U.S. to create a sense of brotherhood and renewal. It is the largest and most publicized of the organizations aimed at individual men's redemption through a more responsible performance of traditional family roles. It is doubtful that much transformation actually occurs among men who attend the rallies. According to Kimmel, "Current men's movements are often like psychological first aid, applying a salve to the wounds and then sending the men back out into the fray" (1996, 331).

In contrast to movements led by and for men in dominant class and racial ethnic positions, marginal groups are more apt to include a political agenda in their organizations. Although organized by religious leaders, the Million Man March combined macro- and micro-social agendas for African American men. Speakers called on men to examine their failures to fulfill traditional masculine responsibilities in the family. They also called on men to build together organizations for the improvement of their communities. Numerous local Million Man organizations were started around the country to foster economic and social initiatives for community improvement. While addressing economic and racial marginality, leaders nonetheless presumed a heterosexual audience, underscoring the marginal position of gay and bisexual men within African American communities.

Women in general, and feminists in particular, have had mixed views of these organizations and events. Some organizations, like the Promise Keepers, have clear statements embracing patriarchy in the family (although these statements are selectively publicized). Others have provided an umbrella under which men with varied views of women's rights gather. Thus, the Million Man March—rather than the Million People March—was seen by some as a call to men's taking leadership in the African American community, and by others as simply a call to men's sharing the work of the community and the family more fairly with women. For communities in economic and political crisis, the increased participation of men is welcome and may be worth the cost of an ambiguous message about patriarchy.

Affirmative Action: Legal Change and Social Resistance

Affirmative action has been the focus of perhaps the most passionate arguments related to women's rights. It requires that employers and educational institutions pursue action to affirmatively improve the representation of women and racial ethnic minority groups among their workers and students. Although evidence clearly shows that reverse discrimination (against whites and men) has rarely occurred, the perception that it is common is widespread among whites, particularly among white men (see Reskin 1998 for a thorough review of the research). Although white women have been the largest group benefiting from affirmative action policy, the popular conception among whites is that affirmative action is largely about race rather than sex. Similarly, evidence that shows the importance of affirmative action policy in creating and enforcing nondiscriminatory corporate practices tends to be disregarded. Instead, the myth persists that affirmative action leads to the employment of unqualified individuals. Numerous other myths continue to survive, partly because of the lack of coverage of the contrary evidence, but also because many people refuse to believe the facts that contradict strongly held beliefs they already have (Valian 1998). For example, many whites believe that *qualified* people of color do not like affirmative action, on the presumption that they will be considered unqualified employees who have merely been hired or promoted to meet corporate goals.

The evidence supports the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in creating more integrated organizations. It shows a neutral or

sometimes positive impact of affirmative action policies on organizations' effectiveness or profitability. It documents the perception among many people of color and white women that the affirmative action is still necessary, because sexist and racist beliefs continue to survive. If affirmative action were dismantled, they believe this would reverse the progress that has been made.

The very different perceptions among white men, white women, and members of various racial and ethnic minority groups stems from multiple causes. With a lack of media attention to evidence, individuals rely on reports from friends and family—typically racially and ethnically homogeneous groups. Individuals with relationships across racial ethnic lines may carefully avoid discussing such a charged topic; and discussions about race-related topics are often taboo. In U.S. culture, individuals who disagree with racist comments or jokes generally believe it would be uncivil to challenge the speaker. To do so, they fear, would be to challenge the very survival of the group in which they are participating (Eliasoph 1999). Thus, people with nonracist attitudes and beliefs suffer from **pluralistic ignorance**, unaware of others' sharing their views because no one speaks up. Those who make racist comments are also unaware of the different views among those taking part in the conversation. Stories of discrimination and reverse discrimination are repeated, distorted, and credited or discredited based on group membership.

The most recent attacks on affirmative action have emphasized the plight of poor and working class white men and women in U.S. society. They propose to replace race and sex with an income measure to better identify those people who should have preferences extended to them in employment and educational decisions. While addressing social class inequality makes sense, these proposals generally argue for *removing* race and sex, arguing that when individuals come from economically comfortable families they do not experience racism and sexism in ways that will harm their access to equal opportunity. Unfortunately, sufficient evidence exists to show that biased treatment has limiting effects on minorities and white women of all social class positions. For example, evidence shows that the same job performance by a woman and a man is still often differently evaluated, with women receiving lower ratings (Valian 1998). Sex-blind promotion policies will be fair only when the performance ratings on which they are based have also been sex blind.

Attitudes about affirmative action, and their sources, are complex. Although individual prejudice helps explain rejection of affirmative action policies (specifically those focused on race), Williams and his colleagues (1999) found that even prejudiced individuals approved of affirmative action if they also believed in basic American values of equal opportunity. This complexity of public sentiment helps explain the relative stability of affirmative action despite numerous announcements by politicians in the late 1990s that they would dismantle it.

Congressional and Presidential elections, appointments to the Federal judiciary, and the selection of employees and supervisors in Federal agencies will continue to affect the ongoing struggle over evolving affirmative action policies, and their enforcement. We have come full circle to the question of the composition of elected and appointed governmental positions and agencies with which the chapter began.

Activism Around Sexualities

In the 1960s, accompanying the growth of the civil rights, women's rights, and the anti-Vietnam War movements, gay men and lesbian women started to organize for their rights. Early efforts preceded the night in June 1969, when police, raiding the Stonewall, a homosexual bar in New York City's Greenwich Village, encountered full-scale resistance. The movement, gaining strength during the rapidly evolving second wave of feminism, was characterized by rifts between and among homosexual men and women as well as solidarity as they worked to overcome legal and informal homophobic practices and beliefs.

Just as women in the civil rights and antiwar movements criticized their male fellow-activists, lesbians criticized gay leaders and organizations for their masculinist biases. Organizing strategies and goals often did not reflect patterned differences in the lifestyles of female and male homosexuals as well as differences related to their different treatment based in societal sexism. The selection of leaders, the dynamics of organizations, and the goals of homosexual activism sometimes reproduced the patriarchal behaviors and values of the heterosexual majority.

Similarly, reformist and radical tendencies among activists have frequently been the basis of conflict within the movement. Some gay rights activists have adopted radical strategies (such as ACT UP's and Queer Nation's "in your face" demonstrations). Others have worked through the system to try to change the laws regarding partner and parental rights of gay men and lesbians, membership in the military, and hate-motivated violence (Jenness 1999).

Two recent events have influenced public perceptions and beliefs about sexualities and their place in U.S. social life. In 1998, Matthew Shepard, a young gay college student, was beaten to death by two men he met in a Laramie, Wyoming, bar. The public outrage, focused on the event and reawakened a year later by the trials, brought awareness and concern of homophobic violence to the fore. At about the same time as the trials, the film *Boys Don't Cry* was released, based on the true story of a rape and murder of a young woman who was living as a young man. Its star won the Academy Award for best actress in 1999. A changing cultural environment led to extensive media coverage about the Shepard murder and the marketing of a feature film sympathetic to a transgendered person. Subsequently, the coverage and the film contribute to further changes in cultural beliefs about sexualities as well as awareness of the extent of homophobic violence.

Thinking About Political Action

Feminist scholars have drawn attention to the essential contributions of rank-and-file members and sympathizers of organization and movement activities: an exclusive focus on public leadership distorts any picture of the process of political change. This distortion systematically understates the ways in which women and socially disadvantaged men have been political actors in the history of this society. Thus, photographs of the formal leaders of many organizations suggest that the organization is male-led.

Women have had leading roles and performed essential rank-and-file work in many obviously political campaigns, such as labor strikes (Fonow 1998) and antilynching activism. In addition, by creating and maintaining a healthy infrastructure of community organizations, working class women and women of color have been crucial in sustaining communities during particularly oppressive periods, and in

mobilizing the communities during periods seeking expanded rights. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was able to develop quickly largely because of the strong tradition of women's activism within African American communities. With the high visibility of the clergy as the leadership of the more reformist branch of the civil rights movement, however, the important roles of churchwomen and other African American women remained invisible at worst and seriously underestimated at best. The contributions of women in the more radical organizations within the civil rights movement were also undervalued (Barnett 1993). The intersection of race and gender had significant implications in the civil rights movement. Black and white women travelled different paths to activism, and participated in different ways once recruited (Irons 1998).

In addition to the many modes that political action can take, apparently apolitical activity also has significant political ramifications. On the basis of their study of a rape crisis center, Schmitt and Martin (1999) conclude that many individual members of mainstream organizations and agencies may work toward feminist goals by using knowledge and persuasion during interactions that are a normal part of organizational and inter-organizational contacts. Similarly, when community activists got jobs in public agencies, they tried to use those jobs to create change (Naples 1991).

From this perspective, most estimates of the magnitude of feminist activism will be fatally flawed, underestimating the actual impact of the feminist movement. One example of the broader influence of the feminist movement is the increased availability of "couples' groups" that many churches offer to help married couples learn to communicate better, with the goals of strengthening marriages and reducing the likelihood of divorce. More generally, feminist action has contributed to the increased variety of family forms, and the growing irrelevance of the concept of a "normal" family (Lempert and DeVault 2000).

Economics and Politics

Focusing on public leadership can also underestimate the role played by interested economically powerful groups. Involved behind the scenes, groups with the power to make significant financial contributions, promises, or threats might stain the reputation of a social

movement or an organization. Thus, in their cross-national review of antifeminist movements past and present, Chafetz and Dworkin (1987) reveal a pattern of the quiet financial support from groups with a vested interest in maintaining the gender status quo. For example, fearing that enfranchised women would support antiliquor policies, prior to 1920 liquor industry organizations were the primary financial backers of antisuffrage activism in some locales.

Protective legislation, by which women were excluded from full economic opportunity, was initially passed for the good of those women. Most advocates of women's rights supported laws prohibiting employers from exposing women and children to dangerous working conditions. However, when the conditions deemed harmful to women are known also to be harmful to men, men are often left unprotected or with less protection by these laws. Corporations chose the least costly alternative. Thus, a particularly high-risk group (women, especially those of child-bearing age) was excluded, and the company avoids the costs of removing or reducing the unsafe workplace conditions to protect all workers. However, through Supreme Court action, exclusion based on sex was ruled illegal in 1991.

If regulations or law suits change the cost-benefit equation through the imposition of fines or payments to injured workers, workplace conditions may improve. Alternatively, corporations will move to locations with weaker regulations or enforcement or both. Men often refrain from demanding workplace cleanup because they fear that employers would shut down or move their operations rather than spend money to comply with government regulations. As long as men have the primary responsibility for wage earning, this pattern persists.

Men therefore often work in hazardous settings, perhaps fearing unemployment, and women are often deprived of employment opportunity because of previously formal, currently habitual patriarchal policy to protect them from hazards. Protective legislation has worked against each sex in different ways.

Gender Ideology and Social Control

Several themes in this culture's version of patriarchy help explain the "logic" underlying the gendering of public policies and civil and criminal law. Patriarchy itself defines maleness as a necessary condi-

tion for authority, though not a sufficient one. Being female, according to definition, means being childlike, powerless, and incapable of surviving independent of a man. In this view, women, by their nature, are vulnerable to victimization and in need of protection. The power that comes with being male implies the potential for violence, the abuse of male power (Levit 1998).

Patterns of social control are also influenced by a related set of themes about sexuality: women are seen as having a malevolent and usually sexual power that makes them dangerous to men. Women's menacing sexuality is aggravated by men's vulnerability, due to their presumed uncontrollably strong, biological sexual drives. Although women's enjoyment of sexuality is currently viewed as normal, women are still perceived as able to control their sexual energies when men cannot. Therefore, a woman cannot use her sexuality as a defense for unacceptable social behavior as a man might for rape and other acts of violence.

Thus, cultural views of the essentially male and essentially female include gender-specific versions of goodness and evil. Women are treated alternatively as childlike and wicked creatures. For example, there is a legal tradition that suggests that females are temptresses whether or not they are conscious of their role. Three ways in which the legal institution has given a message that females are likely to be evil in a sexualized, seductive, manipulative way have been the legal treatment of rape cases, "incorrigible" adolescent girls, and people bringing charges of sexual harassment.

Sexual assault is increasingly understood among social scientists to be an assertion of power rather than an act of uncontrollable sexual desire. Indeed, some men who commit homosexual rape are quite clear that they are not homosexual; their assault was a way to establish dominance. Conversely, male rape victims have reported that they feel stigmatized by others, perhaps more because they have been dominated than because they might be presumed to be homosexual.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence provide the most extreme examples of legal sexism and the clearest examples of legal ideology that defines females as seductive. The victim's appearance and personal history are sometimes formally used to justify her rape. Even rapes of very young girls are sometimes attributed to the seductive behavior of the victim.

The double standard is clear if we think of alternative situations: Could a bank robbery be justified by the presence of an irresistible amount of money? While women are blamed if they are attacked in places they should have avoided, no one blames the victims of drunk drivers for driving near taverns (Fuentes 1997, cited in Feltey 2001).

Legal minors whose offenses do not break any laws are "status offenders;" what they do is considered wrong only because of their minor status. They may be defined as stubborn, labeled incorrigible, and treated as juvenile offenders. This legal label is more often applied to adolescent girls than boys when a family has trouble dealing with an uncooperative teenager. The juvenile justice system appears more willing to pin the incorrigible label on girls. Girls are expected to be rather compliant, docile people, but difficult boys are understandable ("boys will be boys").

When boys and girls persist in a similar problematic behavior, boys' families may be less likely to seek legal assistance and the system may be less responsive to such requests. Juvenile girls are less likely than boys to be incarcerated for criminal behavior but are more likely to be incarcerated for status offenses (Chesney-Lind 1987). This pattern "makes sense" when viewed in the context of traditional gender ideologies.

Justice and Gender

The law as written, interpreted, and enforced demonstrates institutionalized beliefs about gender (Bumiller 1990). Although the last 30 years have seen major changes in legal views of gender, significant problems remain. As discussed in Chapter 2, people have come to believe that problems of gender inequality have been solved (Rhode 1997). Those problems that clearly remain are often justified as resulting from women's own choices and characteristics. For those injustices related to gender that are undeniable, like injustices related to race, many people take no responsibility for working towards change, because they themselves did not create the injustices. These views contribute to the slow rate of change in the legal system and the ways in which it treats people of different racial-gender categories differently.

The law, a commonly used term, disguises great variation within the legal system. In the United States, legislation is enacted on local,

county, state, and federal levels. As long as the U.S. Constitution, Congress, or the federal court system does not override legislative or executive acts, local governments are free to enact their own formal rules. Likewise, judges may make decisions that differ by legal jurisdiction. This possibility creates many different, coexisting legal realities that impinge on people's lives, when inconsistencies remain among rulings. For example, the 1989 Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* returned to states the authority to restrict abortion that had been removed in 1973, when the Court ruled that such laws violated a woman's constitutional right to privacy. The Violence Against Women Act (V.A.W.A.), passed in 1994, states that "all persons shall have the right to be free from crimes motivated by gender" (quoted in Jenness 1999). By the enactment of this law, and the early 1990s group of antihate crimes laws, Congress sought a level of protection for people throughout the United States. In 2000, much of V.A.W.A.'s protection was eliminated when the Supreme Court ruled that it interfered with constitutionally based state's rights. Activists must work in each state for the passage of such protective legislation.

In one state, gender may be irrelevant to the limitations imposed on people or the rights granted to them, but in another state, gender may be legally linked to opportunities or obstacles. The states vary in their granting rights to the same-sex stepparent of a partner's biological child. States and indeed judges may differ in their decision to remove custody from a parent simply because of that parent's homosexuality. In some states, forced sex by a husband is rape only if the wife is living apart from the husband, although in most states it is rape if it is forced even if they live together. Young women who seek abortions are required to inform a parent in some states and not in others. In some states requiring notification, judges are empowered to waive the requirement at their own discretion. Judges who believe abortion is immoral are free to deny a waiver. Women who can afford to will travel from states with restrictive abortion laws or a scarcity of abortion providers to states that support reproductive choice. Women with fewer economic resources, however, must abide by local restrictions; they are less able to afford travel to less restrictive locations.

There is certainly a gendered, punitive dimension to the treatment of expectant parents. Despite rhetoric about protecting the unborn, men are not pressured equally to women to behave in ways known to improve the chances of fetal health. For example, court rul-

ings increasingly punish alcohol abuse by pregnant mothers (resulting in fetal alcohol syndrome). In contrast, fathers' alcohol abuse goes unregulated, even though violence against pregnant wives or partners is strongly related to men's alcohol abuse. Making abortion access difficult is seen as a lesson for irresponsible or immoral teenage girls, but no lessons are directed to the adult men who are the sexual partners in the majority of such pregnancies.

The judiciary continues to be disproportionately male, but the rate of change, especially on lower levels of the system, has been rapid. The first woman was appointed to the federal bench in 1978, but by 1997, 284 women held more than 15 percent of federal judgeships (varying slightly by type of court; Costello et al. 1998). In the early 1970s, the proportion of law students who were women began to increase rapidly. Thus, the pipeline now provides large numbers of women attorneys with the years of experience expected for judicial appointments. Nonetheless, a 1999 study by Citizens for Independent Courts, a nonpartisan research group, found a significantly longer delay in Senate actions on female nominees than on male nominees, and a comparable inequity in the review process regarding nominees of color compared to whites. Although the impact of a more integrated judiciary is debated, there is an expectation that women jurists will contribute to the end of sexism in the courtroom.

States which have called for reviews of sexism in the legal system have found it to be widespread (see Crites and Hepperle 1987). Although legislatures have been quite responsive to calls for less biased rape laws, in numerous instances judicial decisions have enforced a more traditional view of female sexuality. In these cases, the victim is blamed for provoking a male, who is supposedly always potentially uncontrollable by his nature (Spencer 1987). This independent ability to undo or ignore legislative decisions exemplifies the importance of judicial appointments. In recent years, however, the power of grass roots activism has been demonstrated regarding these issues, and the goal of changing the rules of evidence has been achieved in many jurisdictions.

It is distorting to discuss the importance of gender without referring to its interaction with race and class in criminal justice treatment (Chasin 1997). Being male or female is only one of the socially fateful categories for people in contact with the criminal justice system. Although similar crimes are committed against members of different racial or ethnic groups, there is a patterned difference in the serious-

ness of punishment: research has repeatedly found that when whites are victimized, offenders receive harsher punishments than when the victim is other than white.

The race or ethnicity of the accused has been shown to be pertinent at the many decision points in the criminal justice system. A long series of research projects, conducted in many jurisdictions, finds a disparity in treatment depending on the race, ethnicity, and gender of the individual. For example, Spohn, Gruhl, and Welch (1990) report that within each racial ethnic group, accused women are less likely than men to have initial charges pursued to trial. However, the cases against white *men* are less likely than those against either African American or Latina *women* to reach trial. The disproportionately high number of young Hispanic men who are in U.S. prisons has been used to argue against immigration. Yet, when criminal records are carefully studied, the evidence reveals that immigration is not a cause of high crime rates (Hagan and Palloni 1999); instead, the rates of incarceration reflect the differential impact of immigration and criminal justice policies.

In the 1990s, prison populations swelled, and the construction and running of prisons has become one of the costliest parts of government. A major component of the increase comes from the drug laws which have removed discretion from the hands of federal judges. State laws against drug offenders generally allow more discretion in sentencing than do federal laws. However, research indicates that people of color are far more likely than whites accused of drug crimes to be charged in federal rather than state court. Thus, the incarceration rates and lengths of sentences are far more racially disproportionate than is the commission of drug-related crimes (Russell 1998). Most dramatic, perhaps, are the discrepancies between penalties for possession of crack cocaine (very long punishments) and powder cocaine (much shorter punishments). The former is most likely to be used among people of color and poorer people, while the latter is more likely to be used by whites and higher-income people.

The long-standing practice of "racial profiling" (which tends to be racial-gender profiling) became an important political issue in the late 1990s. On the basis of stereotypes, law enforcement personnel often treat men of color, particularly African American men, more harshly than other members of the public. Relying on white Americans' exaggerated fears of African American men (fed by distorted media representations), police have been allowed to exercise more forceful, often

violent strategies (Russell 1998). The most well-publicized of these is the practice of stopping drivers without adequate cause (informally referred to as being stopped for Driving While Black). This practice has been justified based on unfounded beliefs in higher rates of transporting contraband (e.g., illegal drugs, weapons) among drivers of color. However, several studies of the actual rate of success (that is, stops resulting in the discovery of contraband) have discovered that white drivers are as likely, or even more likely, to be carrying illegal materials than are African American or Latino drivers (Russell 1998).

"Flying While Black" has recently received growing attention. Even though African American and Latino men are disproportionately stopped for street searches (of people not in vehicles) and traffic stops, "Flying While Black" has been a problem for both women and men, who are disproportionately singled out for searches by U.S. Customs officers. In 2000, this problem became publicized with the filing of a class action suit on behalf of African American women returning to the United States from locations in the Caribbean. Dismantling this group of practices is among the most recent focuses for activism by African American organizations and other supporters of equal rights.

Finally, more complexity is added by looking at the racial ethnic categories of the accused and the victim of a crime. For example, African American men who are convicted of raping white women get harsher sentences than white men convicted of raping white women or African American men convicted of raping African American women. African American women, it should be added, have a higher rate of victimization than white women (Feltey 2001).

Technology and Public Policy

Changes in reproductive and birth control technologies exemplify the complex relationship between public policies and technological change. For example, medical researchers have developed a "morning after" combination of drugs that in effect brings on an early abortion and enables women to avoid visiting an abortion clinic. Avoiding the public, often hostile experience, or the trip to a less limiting jurisdiction, women will be able to make their decisions more freely when the drug is available. Regulations developed to limit access to abortion may not be effective in limiting access to this new technology. Another pharmaceutical approach to ending pregnancy,

RU-486 is widely used in other countries. However, strong mobilization of anti-abortion groups has discouraged drug companies from producing the drug. This drug has proven beneficial for a variety of other conditions (such as advanced rheumatoid arthritis), whose sufferers are also prevented from using the drug in the United States because of the anti-abortion activism. Arrangements for the limited availability of abortion, worked out through political conflict and compromise, are rendered obsolete when new technologies become available.

Summary

Changes are being made in the gender ideology emanating from the political and legal arenas. However, the political and legal system, with its multiplicity of jurisdictions, is still characterized by mixed messages about gender. Different courts and legislative bodies pass laws and make judgments that reflect multiple ideologies of gender. Simply put, we have moved from a long-standing systemwide acceptance of the presumably fundamental differences between females and males (and thus from a limit to their automatically common responsibilities and rights) to an inconsistent stance within the political and legal institution that makes each possible right or limitation problematic.

While a radical feminist perspective directs our attention to the importance of cultural beliefs about the sexes, a multiracial perspective highlights the fateful differences in treatment of people of the same sex but different class or racial-ethnic groups, whether they are victims or perpetrators of crime.

Groups that routinely experience less than equal treatment continue to push for change. State referenda and legislation have been proposed to grant antidiscrimination protections based on sexual preference, and to extend the privileges and responsibilities of legal marriage to same-sex couples. Law suits, boycotts, and demonstrations are used by those fighting the practice of racial profiling.

Those whose immediate intimate environment suits them, and who have autonomy and adequate income from their work, underestimate the importance of political life. However, as inroads into reproductive rights increasingly threaten heterosexual couples' control over their family planning and as the relationship between govern-

ment policies and the economic status of workers changes, more individuals are becoming aware of the crucial role of the political institution in defining, facilitating, or removing the ways in which aspects of life are gendered.

Enormous resources were devoted to the goal of passing an Equal Rights Amendment. Indeed, the persistent pursuit of its ratification was a major source of conflict within the feminist movement because of the consequent lack of attention to and resources for other issues. We can understand arguments for giving the proposed Amendment a high priority when we realize that it could have produced consistency among jurisdictions. Instead, people and organizations continue to struggle, issue by issue and jurisdiction by jurisdiction, for equal rights.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the time line (Figure 6.1). Make a list of five additional historical events or trends that you think help in understanding the evolving U.S. gender system. Insert them in the appropriate places on the figure, and think about how their occurrence might have affected, and been affected by, the other events nearby in time.
2. Select two or three current realities of gender you would like to see changed, and sketch a strategy for achieving the changes. How does your strategy draw upon what was effective in making change in the past?
3. Working with each of the various feminist perspectives in turn, explore how it helps make sense of the patterns between gender and crime, and what questions it seems to leave unanswered.

The Changing Gender System

How can we predict the future meanings and systems of gender in this society? What will it mean to “do gender” in everyday life? How central will gender be in determining quality of life, and how extensively will the economic system reflect and reinforce differences in status for males and females?

A Changing Economy and a Changing Culture

The new economy described in Chapter 5 has had an enormous impact on the gender system. Cultural and political changes occurred more slowly than the remarkable change in labor market participation and the subsequent arrangements called for at home. The everyday lives of many people have changed, with wives earning more than their husbands in 20 to 25 percent of married couples, and couples working different shifts so that child care can be provided by parents rather than strangers. Even without a particular commitment to or identification with feminism, women and men more often cross lines that seemed impermeable 30 years ago.

Like the continuing, but weakened, linkage of occupational distribution to sex, most people have not given up conceptions of gender-appropriate guidelines for living, but now often treat norms of feminine and masculine behavior as general suggestions rather than hard-and-fast rules. At the same time, some people who have moved away

from traditional norms in one aspect of their lives (such as wage-earning) have chosen to embrace traditional behaviors in other aspects of their lives.

In common with the socialist feminist standpoint, the multiracial standpoint puts power, especially political and economic power, at the center of explanations of the gender system. The economy is continuing its rapid changes, with increasing globalization and increasing concentration of ownership (fewer and fewer corporations controlling larger markets and more industries). The shapes of hegemonic masculinity have changed over hundreds of years to better suit the changing dominant political-economic forces (Connell 1995). As those forces continue shaping change in the future, we can expect masculinities and femininities—their content and the extent of their salience—to shift.

To foster creative thinking about the future, Acker (1999) offers one metaphor for contemporary capitalism: it is a monster that mutates, with changes in technologies and social organization. How it changes is uncertain but she maintains that “As the mutations continue, classes change, as do the forms of gender and racial oppression” (63). The demonstrations during the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle in 1999, and those in Washington D.C. during the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings in 2000, illustrate that people organize against what they consider destructive mutations. Ignorance about these demonstrations, as well as the controversies they belong to, reflects mass media programming decisions that undermine public discussion of major policy questions.

In the area of gender as in other areas of U.S. cultural life, disagreement is rife about where we are and where we should go. While the mainstream watches popular television series in which homosexuality and sex between single adults is taken for granted (as acceptable), well-organized and seriously disaffected segments of the population find these shows morally unacceptable. In 2000, many women were physically harassed after a parade in New York City, while numerous police officers refused to take action. The common denigration of women on so-called “shock radio” may have contributed to the view that this was acceptable behavior (Smith 2000). The defections of Pat Buchanan and Donald Trump from the Republican Party illustrate the strength of beliefs that the world has changed fundamentally, and the two parties in power will not provide the leader-

ship needed to redirect our progress. The coming years will likely not be smooth, regardless of where they take us.

Rather than attempting the impossible by trying to predict the future meanings of gender in this society, let us summarize the basic premises of this book. They will help as we try to understand and explain shifting social realities in the future.

1. People can change in important ways. They can do so more quickly than is implicit in studies of socialization and differences between women and men. The impact of opportunity structures on people's behaviors is separate and distinct from the differential socialization of males and females. Social arrangements influence what an individual does, whether or not that individual approves of such arrangements. Changes in the norms of socialization and gender need not originate from internalized values. Change can be initiated from external sources. It is possible to create obstacles to discourage behaviors that are no longer acceptable and rewards to encourage behaviors that are desirable.

Just as some people conform to traditional gender-related norms because of social pressure and despite their own beliefs, people may change their patterned responses as new definitions of gender-appropriate behavior emerge. Employers who fear a stiff financial penalty if they discriminate are likely to avoid discrimination, despite prejudices they may have. People who are not pleased with new norms nonetheless often conform to them. Meanwhile, a new generation is being socialized by models of newly accepted behavior.

Finally, pragmatic conformity to new social constraints may lead people to realize that their previous definition of reality was inaccurate. People who are pushed into what they consider gender inappropriate situations, for example, newly integrated workplaces, may see that their previous beliefs about men's or women's capabilities were actually invalid (Gray 1984). This change in viewpoint is happening as the idea spreads that sex alone is not an adequate basis for different opportunities or limitations. This view is replacing the assumption that males and females are so different that there is no reason to expect their treatment to be comparable.

2. Culture and social structure are interdependent. Changes in one influence affect changes in another; the initiation of social change is not restricted to one or the other. For example, beliefs changed among the Catholic laity in recognition of the successful integration of women into low-level leadership positions: the struc-

ture influenced culture. Now the laity are an important source of pressure on the church for further changes in arrangements, such as the ordination of women as priests: the cultural views led people to press for structural change (Wallace 1988).

3. Social institutions are highly interdependent. This has implications in assessing strategies for social change (regardless of the direction of change) as well as for the maintenance of current arrangements. It also directs attention to the particular ways in which a change (whether or not self-consciously aimed at gender change) in one area of social life may impinge on other areas—because of the effects on resources, or worldviews of people, who actually participate in multiple institutions. For example, many families have revised their gendered arrangements because men's earnings have declined (with the export or automation of well-paid manufacturing jobs and the expansion of less well-paid service jobs). Women's earnings have become more important in those homes, and women's childrearing time outside the labor force, or in part-time rather than full-time employment has shrunk (see Chapter 4). This reduction in the degree of inequality in contributions of women and men has also led many women to be less interested in marrying (Edin 2000). Nevertheless, marriage continues to provide more economical stability than divorce for most women (Smock et al., 1999).

4. Gendered realities cannot be understood separately from memberships in social categories of race and class. First, being male or female has different implications for people depending on their access to resources. That is, access to economic power or social prestige offers some women some protection from general disadvantages in a sexist society. Conversely, any promise of "male privilege" is much less significant for economically or ethnically marginal men than for men with economic power. Clearly, the erosion of privilege is experienced differently because it was not possessed equally (Pfeil 1995).

The individual's construction of a sense of masculinity or femininity is designed using available opportunities. People's ideas of where their own interests lie reflect the importance of their combined race, gender, and class memberships. The form and extent of future activism will be influenced by the changing meanings of these intersecting positions, particularly in the new economy.

Historically, economic factors have been important prerequisites to social change. In addition to the impact of changing economic con-

ditions, such as the development of industrialization and its removal of men's work from their homes, stability or relative affluence on the societal level has been associated with major changes in gender stratification, particularly in the definition of male family roles. Feminist activism and other human rights movements have occurred in periods of relative economic affluence in the society as a whole. It is easier to share resources in new ways in a time of relative abundance; social protest is also easier to sustain in times of greater affluence.

How will previously observed relationships between periods of economic well-being and human rights activism apply to new economic patterns? As more women are employed in the upper-tier positions than in the past, those may be the foundation of continued or increased feminist activism. However, women in the lower tier, which is more and more characterized by economic hardship, may not be activist. Alternatively, economically marginal women may focus their activism on the struggles they share with men of their racial-ethnic and economic positions.

Culturally, stereotypes that rationalize discrimination are based on beliefs about the intersection of gender, race-ethnicity, and class. Researchers have started to examine the subtyping that people do, and how it varies with their own characteristics (Glick and Fiske 1999).

5. Economically and politically dominant groups have more control than others over the nature of the stratification system, including the ways in which it is gendered. This applies at the macro-social level with the establishment of such policies as the welfare "reform" that includes mothers with toddlers among those recipients of aid who must work outside the home. In activity more explicitly aimed at gender stratification, it applies to participation in feminist and antifeminist movements. Economically and politically powerful groups have played important, although often covert, economic and planning roles in antifeminist movements in various societies throughout history (Chafetz and Dworkin 1987). In organizations (the middle level of social analysis), power affects the ability to change or maintain existing arrangements. Coalitions form and re-form, creating a power base through their combination of resources (Hall 1999). At the micro-social level, individuals in small groups affect the significance of gender; for example, wives whose earnings are essential may insist that money go to buy services that they would otherwise be expected to perform.

6. Through individual agency, people make change.

Although agency is often limited to finding ways to adapt to existing conditions, it is also the route to social change. Individuals also exercise agency to reinstitute or retain old practices (Reskin 2000). For example, in organizations with formal policies endorsing equal opportunity, people with traditional, or stereotypical, views of gender may influence co-workers' perceptions of jobs as male- or female-appropriate, and their perceptions of what their occupational choices realistically are (Ridgeway 1997). Whether affecting the practices of small groups to which one belongs, or organizations, or working through coalition to create full-scale social movements, the individual has a role in shaping social life, moving change forward or protecting gains already made.

Understanding and actively applying these ideas will hopefully lead to more sophisticated inquiry in the future: when a change in the social world catches our attention, we should try to imagine ways in which it may be connected to the gendering of social life. By integrating these premises into our views of how things happen, we may be more alert for subtle repercussions of that change. We may produce a "second generation" of questions that will help in the development of a more accurate and complex understanding of reality.

An Ongoing Tension: Generalizing and Particularizing

The multiracial feminist standpoint is the newest and perhaps the most promising perspective for the developing sociology of gender. Because of its fundamental emphasis on how the particular identities of race and ethnicity, class, and sex intersect, it demands a broad research program. By studying lived realities, we see how people develop their ideas and their actions related to the gender system. We will be better able to predict what may happen in the future as agency is exercised to adjust to or rebel against existing gender demands. At the same time, the culture of sociology itself values the ultimate development of more generalized propositions, models, or even theories. Theories are abstract, and are judged by their success at explaining wide ranging observations. The challenge for the sociology of gender will be to collect observations at the many different points of lived experience, without losing sight of the ultimate goal of developing more generalized explanations of gender in social life.

Discussion Questions

1. This chapter highlights a few generalizations that help us analyze gender-related phenomena. Develop a generalization that you think should be added to this list.
2. Identify a current gender-related controversy in the news. Use ideas from this chapter to predict what will happen next, and in the long run, with the controversy.
3. Rhode identifies three obstacles to reducing gender inequality: the denial that it still exists, the belief that people are generally content with current (even unequal) arrangements, and many people's view that even though inequality is undesirable, they have no responsibility for it nor for working toward its elimination. How would you respond to each of these ideas?

Glossary

affirmative action The policy of proactively working to improve the representation of women and racial-ethnic minority group members in employment and in educational institutions.

agency An individual's capacity to actively pursue ways to participate in, adapt to, or change her or his circumstances.

biculturalism The practice of moving between the design for living of one's ethnic group and that of the dominant culture; belonging to and participating in both cultures.

career feminism The viewpoint, during the second wave, which envisioned freeing individuals from sexism through personal transformation.

cognitive-developmental model A view of gender development in which children learn their own genders in much the same way that they learn the identity of physical objects, and they recognize that these physical objects retain identity over time.

culture A people's established beliefs and practices; their design for living.

difference feminism A perspective which highlights women's sexual and procreative oppression, and celebrates women's procreative, sexual, and nurturance characteristics; maximalist feminism. This position contrasts with equality, or minimalist, feminism.

"doing gender" An individual behaving in conformity to a broadly applicable set of rules for acting like a male or a female in that society.

downsizing The process of cutting the size of a corporation's workforce, while not reducing its profits.

- equality feminism** A perspective advocating equality based on a minimization of gender differences; minimalist feminism. This position contrasts with difference feminism.
- essentialism** The belief that many gender differences are actually biologically shaped.
- family** A group whose members are linked by ties of blood, marriage, or adoption.
- feminism** The view that women are oppressed in significant ways and that this oppression should be ended.
- frame** To place a news report in a particular context, giving a particular way to make sense of the facts of the story, and implicitly guiding the reporter to exclude facts that are irrelevant within that context.
- gender** The totality of meanings that are attached to the sexes within a particular social system.
- gender appropriate** Those attitudes or behaviors that conform to the norms for one's sex.
- gender identity** The beliefs an individual holds about the relation between her or his sex and its social meanings.
- gender system** A system of meaning and differentiation, linked to the sexes through social arrangements.
- glass ceiling** The barrier in many organizations limiting women's promotion beyond particular levels.
- hegemony** Domination, particularly cultural domination.
- homophobia** The fear and hatred of homosexuality.
- ideology** Belief system.
- index of dissimilarity** A measure of the extent of occupational segregation.
- intersectionality** The simultaneous importance of race, class, and gender (and, sometimes, additional dimensions, such as age and sexuality) in formulating questions and looking for answers about gender.
- job segregation** Restriction of employment (usually by sex and/or race-ethnicity) in an occupation within a given employment setting.

- liberal feminism** The idea that social change can be achieved through reformist rather than extreme efforts.
- macro-social** The largest scale of social life, such as national, multinational, and international levels.
- maximalist feminism** A perspective which highlights women's sexual and procreative oppression, and celebrates women's procreative, sexual, and nurturance characteristics; difference feminism. This position contrasts with equality, or minimalist, feminism.
- micro-social** The smallest scale of social life, such as couples, and small groups of people.
- middle level** Social life among larger numbers of people than in small groups, but smaller than units such as nations.
- minimalist feminism** Refers to the view that equality should be based on a minimization of gender differences; equality feminism. Contrasts with maximalist feminism.
- mommy track** A separate career ladder for women, with limited prospects, because employers presume that the loyalties of the women on it are greater to family than to job.
- multiracial feminism** The perspective that focuses simultaneously on the importance of the intersection of race, class, and gender (and, sometimes, additional dimensions, such as age and sexuality) in formulating questions and looking for answers about gender.
- norm** A social rule (which may or may not be official or even articulated).
- normative** Following a social rule or norm for behavior.
- object relations** A theoretical perspective on individual development that views women as having an overdeveloped capacity to connect empathically with others, and men as having an underdeveloped capacity for such connection.
- opportunity structure** The patterned access an individual or group has to particular social positions, including the expected ease or difficulty of access to each of the positions.
- patriarchy** The social domination by males over females.
- pluralistic ignorance** The condition of thinking one's views or behaviors are unusual, although they actually are not.

postmodern feminism The view that challenges (seeking to unsettle or destabilize) existing assumptions about how the world works, particularly with reference to dimensions of sex and gender.

radical feminism The view that emphasizes gender as the crucial dimension dividing people, and focuses on how males dominate women through a system of supporting beliefs and social structures.

role The set of responsibilities, privileges, and obligations that are connected to a particular social position, or status.

schema theory A view of gender development in which the person constructs two schema (one about males and one about females) that are normally evolving as the person is exposed to different or more complex aspects of reality.

sex identity A perception of a person as being male or being female, or being transgendered, and the sense that this is a permanent trait of the person.

sexual identity The sense that one is homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual.

significant others People with whom the child has frequent and regular contact, who have control over rewards and punishments for the child, and who have some image of what the child should become.

social construction The view that aspects of reality are created by social factors rather than pre-existing in nature.

social control The use of rewards and punishments to enforce social norms.

social institution A constellation of activities and ideas that addresses a major area of basic human needs in a particular society.

socialist feminism The view that patriarchy and capitalism are equally important forces in explaining gender inequalities in society.

socialization The process of learning the rules of the social group or culture to which we belong or hope to belong, and learning to define ourselves and others within that setting.

social learning model A view of child development that emphasizes that children respond to rewards.

social stratification The differentiation among people, based on membership in categories socially defined as significant, and the accompanying differences in their obligations and their access to resources.

social structure The pattern of social relationships and behaviors in a group, organization, or society.

stagflation A state in which an economy has a low growth rate but a high inflation rate.

status A particular social position within a given social structure.

telecommuting Performing employment-related activities at home while using communications technologies.

womanism A perspective that simultaneously focuses on race-ethnicity, class, and gender in the struggle for all people's liberation.

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Author Index

A

Acker, Joan, 178
Adam, Barry D., 158
Addelston, Jodi, 33
Ahmed, Leila, 45
Albert, Alexa A., 69
Alessio, John C., 124
Allen, Sarah M., 102
Altman, Dennis, 50–52
American Civil Liberties Union, 97
Amott, Teresa L., 121
Andrzejewski, Julie, 124
Angier, Natalie, 63
Arber, Sara, 95, 98

B

Baca Zinn, Maxine, 13
Barnett, Bernice McNair, 167
Benitez, Margarita, 123
Benokraitis, Nijole V., 126
Benston, Margaret, 100
Berggren, Heidi, 159
Bergvall, Victoria, 39
Bernstein, Jared, 146
Bielby, Denise D., 107
Bing, Janet, 39
Bird, Chloe E., 103
Blau, Joel, 140, 142
Blum, Linda M., 95
Blumstein, Philip, 75, 76

Bodine, Ann, 37
Bogdan, Janet, 99
Borowiecki, John, 73
Brannon, Robert, 32
Braunstein, Richard, 159
Brod, Harry, 18
Brodkin, Karen, 31. *See also* Sacks,
Karen Brodkin
Brody, Leslie, 66, 68, 84
Brown, Kendrick, 165
Brown, Tony N., 165
Brumberg, Joan Jacobs, 2, 15, 161
Bucholtz, Mary, 39
Bumiller, Kristin, 170
Bureau of the Census. *See* U.S.
Department of Commerce.

C

Calloway, H., 27
Cameron, Deborah, 38
Cancian, Francesca M., 96
Cantor, Joanne, 44
Caputi, Jane, 28
Carolan, Marsha T., 101
Carroll, Susan J., 152
Casper, Monica J., 104
Center for the American Woman
and Politics, 151
Chafetz, Janet Saltzman, 168, 181
Chasin, Barbara, 90, 172
Chen, Anthony S., 77–78

Chesney-Lind, Meda, 53, 170
 Chodorow, Nancy, 68
Chore Wars, 106
 Chow, Esther Ngan-Ling, 160
 Christensen, Kimberly, 159
 Citizens for Independent Courts,
 172
 Clarke, Lee, 130
 Cole, Elizabeth R., 44, 54
 Collins, Patricia Hill, 49, 160
 Collinson, David L., 83
 Coltrane, Scott, 48, 108
 Connell, R.W., 13, 18, 29, 74, 90,
 144–145, 161, 178
 Costain, Anne N., 159
 Costello, Cynthia B., 91, 92–93,
 94, 172
 Council of Economic Advisors,
 125
 Cowan, Ruth Schwartz, 103
 Crenshaw, Kimberle, 13
 Crites, Laura L., 172
 Curcio, William, 111
 Czajka, John L., 95, 98

D

Dalton, Susan E., 107
 Darling, Marsha J., 150
 David, Deborah S., 32
 Davidson, Laurie, 121, 153
 Delgado, Richard, 44
 DeMies, Debra K., 101
 Deussen, Theresa, 95
 DeVault, Marjorie L., 167
 Dill, Bonnie Thornton, 13
 Doherty, William J., 106
 Doolittle, Fred C., 81
 Dow, Bonnie J., 42
 Dowd, Maureen, 150
 Drakich, Janice, 39
 Dunne, Gillian A., 107
 Dworkin, Anthony Gary, 168, 181
 Dworkin, Shari L., 73

E

Edin, Kathryn, 118, 180
 Edwards, Linda N., 131
 Eliasoph, Nina, 164
 Ellis, Deborah, 71, 83
 England, Paula, 11, 15
 Epstein, Cynthia Fuchs, 48
 Erickson, Martha F., 106
 Evans, Sara M., 154

F

Faludi, Susan, 161
 Farrell, Michael P., 107
 Farrell, Warren, 161
 Fausto–Sterling, Anne, 62
 Feagin, Joe R., 126
 Featherstone, Brid, 109
 Feltey, Kathryn M., 90, 170, 174
 Ferguson, Susan J., 92
 Ferree, Myra Marx, 11, 156
 Field–Hendley, Elizabeth, 131
 Fine, Michelle, 19, 33
 Fiske, Susan T., 181
 Fong–Torres, Ben, 43
 Fonow, Mary Margaret, 166
 Forman, Tyrone A., 165
 Frankenberg, Ruth, 13
 Frankfort, Ellen, 50
 Freed, Alice, 37, 39
 Freedman, Audrey, 48
 Frehill, Lisa M., 80
 Freund, Peter, 104
 Fuentes, Annette, 170

G

Garcia, Alma M., 160
 Garfinkel, Perry, 40
 Gerson, Kathleen, 106, 134
 Gilligan, Carol, 48
 Glenn, Evelyn Nakano, 13

Glick, Peter, 181
 Goldin, Claudia, 21, 96
 Gonyea, Judith, 90
 Gordon, Laura Kramer, 121, 153.
 See also Kramer, Laura
 Grant, Linda, 64
 Gray, Stan, 179
 Greenhouse, Steven, 103, 108, 131
 Gruber, Amanda, 73
 Gruhl, John, 173
 Gupta, Sanjiv, 92, 180
 Guthrie, Doug, 147

H

Hacker, Sally L., 38
 Hagan, John, 173
 Hall, Kira, 39
 Hall, Richard H., 181
 Hannerz, Ulf, 106
 Harris, Judith, 64
 Harrison, Kristen, 44
 Hartmann, Heidi, 142, 144
 Hatchett, Shirley J., 90
 Haubeggar, Christy, 63–64
 Hawkins, Alan J., 102
 Hays, Sharon, 106–107
 Headlam, Bruce, 65
 Hecker, Daniel E., 124
 Henley, Nancy, 39
 Hepperle, Winifred L., 172
 Hequembourg, Amy L., 107
 Hess, Beth B., 11, 156
 Hesse-Biber, Sharlene, 14
 Hill, Shirley A., 67
 Hochschild, Arlie, 33–34
 hooks, bell, 160
 Hooyman, Nancy R., 90
 Huddy, Leonie, 41, 159

I

Irons, Jenny, 167

Isaacs, Susan, 41, 44–45

J

Jackson, James S., 68, 90, 165
 Jacobs, Eva E., 99
 James, Deborah, 39
 Jenness, Valerie, 166, 171
 Johnson, Earl S., 81

K

Katz, Lawrence F., 21, 96
 Kendall, Lori, 37
 Kilborn, Peter T., 140
 Kimmel, Michael S., 161, 162
 King, Leslie, 104
 Klein, Patricia Vawter, 130
 Kleinman, Sherryl, 83
 Kohlberg, Lawrence, 68–69
 Kohut, Andrew, 152
 Kolata, Gina, 62–63
 Kramer, Laura, 37, 133–134. *See also* Gordon, Laura Kramer
 Krebs, Sarah B., 161
 Kurz, Demie, 109

L

Lacey, Marc, 93
 Lamb, Michael E., 66, 106
 Lein, Laura, 118
 Lempert, Lora Bex, 167
 Levine, Ann, 81
 Levine, James A., 66, 106
 Levit, Nancy, 152, 169
 Lewin, Tamar, 104
 Liebow, Elliot, 141
The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter, 52
 Lim, In-Sook, 100
 Lorber, Judith, 11, 17, 18, 31, 34,
 68, 128, 160

Louneski, Edward R., 106

M

Maccoby, Eleanor E., 65–66
Manning, Wendy D., 180
Mansbridge, Jane J., 158
Marin, Rick, 107
Martin, Emily, 48–49
Martin, George, 104
Martin, Patricia Yancey, 83, 167
Martinez, Estella, 101
Marusza, Julia, 33
Mason, Karen Oppenheim, 95, 98
Matthaei, Julie A., 121
McBrier, Debra Branch, 136
McCall, Leslie, 131
McCloskey, Laura Ann, 111
McGuffey, Shawn C., 72
Media Women-New York, 35
Messerschmidt, James, 78
Messner, Michael A., 73, 74
Meyer, Madonna Harrington, 104
Miles, Shari, 91, 92–93, 94, 172
Milke, Melissa A., 101
Miller, Casey, 37, 38
Miller-Bernal, Leslie, 80
Mills, Kay, 159
Mischel, Walter, 69
Mishel, Lawrence, 146
Mitchell, Kirsten B., 94–95
Mullings, Leith, 31, 42, 129

N

Naples, Nancy A., 167
Nasar, Sylvia, 94–95
The National Law Journal, 107
The National Women's History Project, 154
Nelkin, Dorothy, 53
The New York Times, 73–74, 118
Norris, Pippa, 150, 159

Not Without My Veil, 46

O

Office of the Historian of the United States House of Representatives, 151
Olivardia, Roberto, 73

P

Padavic, Irene, 124, 129
Palloni, Alberto, 173
Parelius, Ann P., 79–80
Parker, Kimberly, 152
Patterson, Charlotte, 106
Payne, Kenneth W., 50
Perkins, H. Wesley, 101
Pfeil, Fred, 180
Pleck, Joseph H., 66, 106
Pope, Harrison G, Jr., 73
Porter, Judith R., 69
Press, Andrea L., 44, 54
Press, Julie E., 101
Prose, Francine, 152

R

Ratcliff, Kathryn Strother, 99
Reskin, Barbara F., 124, 129, 136, 163, 182
Rhode, Deborah L., 35, 170
Rich, B. Lindsay, 72
Ridd, Rosemary, 27
Ridgeway, Cecilia, 182
The Righteous Babes, 10, 161
Risch, Stephen J., 50
Risman, Barbara J., 34, 71–72, 83–84
Robinson, John P., 101
Roschelle, Anne R., 91
Rosen, Ellen Israel, 121
Roth, Louise Marie, 147

Rothman, Barbara Katz, 104
 Russell, Katheryn K., 149, 173–174
 Rust, Paula C., 78

S

Sacks, Karen Brodtkin, 19. *See also* Brodtkin, Karen
 Sadker, David, 71
 Sadker, Myra, 71
 Sassler, Sharon, 92, 94
 Schmitt, Frederika E., 167
 Schneider, Joseph W., 38
 Schoen, Robert, 92, 94
 Schorr, Lisbeth B., 138–139
 Schreiber, Ronnee, 152
 Schwartz, Pepper, 75, 76, 100
 Sengupta, Somini, 118
 Sered, Susan Starr, 46
 Singer, Amy E., 100
 Smith, Barbara Ellen, 13
 Smith, Daryl G., 80
 Smith, Ruth Bayard, 178
 Smock, Pamela J., 180
 Sokoloff, Natalie J., 15
 Spencer, Cassie C., 172
 Spohn, Cassia, 173
 Sprague, Joey, 20, 67
Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 94
 Steel, Brent S., 54, 66
 Steinberg, Ronnie J., 145–146
 Stefancic, Jean, 45
 Stevens, Patricia E., 96
 Stoltenberg, John, 17
 Stone, Anne J., 91, 92–93, 94, 172
 Suárez, Zulerma E., 101
 Sudarkasa, Niara, 99
 Sullivan, Maureen, 101
 Swift, Kate, 37, 38

T

Tang, Alisa, 8, 119
 Tavis, Carol, 47
 Taylor, Verta, 105
 Thompson, Becky W., 14
 Thorne, Barrie, 71
 Tichenor, Veronica Jaris, 102
 Tidball, Charles S., 80
 Tidball, M. Elizabeth, 80
 Torres, Myriam, 165
 Townsley, Eleanor, 101
 Treichler, Paula A., 52

U

U.S. Department of Commerce, 90, 99
 U.S. Department of Education, 79
 U.S. Department of Justice, 110
 U.S. Department of Labor, 123, 127

V

Valian, Virginia, 163, 164

W

Wajcman, Judy, 103–104
 Wallace, Ruth A., 180
 Walters, Suzanna Danuta, 40
 Warner, Rebecca L., 54, 66
 Weaver, David, 159–160
 Weis, Lois, 33
 Welch, Susan, 173
 West, Candace, 63
 Whittaker, Terri, 109
 Williams, Christine L., 134
 Williams, David R., 165
 Winkler, Anne E., 100, 133
 Wolf-Wendel, Lisa E., 80
 Wollstonecraft, Mary, 9

Wootton, Barbara H., 126, 128

Z

Zavella, Patricia, 36, 60–61, 80

Zicklin, Gilbert, 75

Zimbalist, Andrew, 73

Zimmerman, Don H., 63

Zimmerman, Mary K., 20

Subject Index

A

Abortion, 44, 96, 172, 174–175
Activism, 5–6, 7, 32, 38, 135, 166, 178. *See also* Feminist movement; Gay and lesbian activism; Men's activism
ACT UP, 165
Adulthood. *See* Life course
Affirmative action, 136, 163–165, 185
African American, 31, 36, 42, 43, 60, 63–64, 67, 94–95, 99, 121–123, 125, 127, 128. *See also* Racial-ethnic
Agency, 5, 35, 59, 70, 147, 182, 185
Aggression, 43, 70, 72. *See also* Personality; Violence
Aging, 53, 50, 90, 118
Aid to Families with Dependent Children. *See* Welfare
AIDS, 33, 50, 52, 96
Anorexia nervosa. *See* Eating problems
Antiabortion, 44, 175
Anti-ERA, 157–158
Antifeminism, 160–161, 167–168, 181
Appearance, 15, 15, 44, 63, 72–74, 169. *See also* Eating problems

Asian Americans, 36, 43, 77–78, 99, 160. *See also* Racial-ethnic
Athletics, 34, 55, 63, 72–74, 145
Attitudes, beliefs, and attitude change, 54–55, 65, 66, 71–72, 80–82, 92, 97–103, 105, 124, 132, 149, 158–159, 163–165
Authority, 25–27, 29, 31, 83

B

Backlash. *See* Antifeminism
Belief systems. *See* Ideology and ideological change
Biculturalism, 36, 101, 185
Biology, 26, 27, 29, 34, 61, 63, 67, 105, 158. *See also* Essentialism; Sex differences
Bisexuality, 32, 74, 162
Blue-collar. *See* Social class
Boys Don't Cry, 166
Breadwinning. *See* Providing

C

Campaign financing, 150, 151, 167
Capitalism, 14, 15, 40, 42, 50, 103, 116–117; 178
Career decisions, *See* Occupational choices
Career feminism, 156, 185

Catholic church, 179–180
 Chicana/o, 31, 60, 80. *See also*
 Latina/o; Racial-ethnic.
 Child abuse, 11, 108, 109. *See also*
 Domestic violence; Violence
 Child bearing. *See* Pregnancy;
 Reproduction
 Child care, 58, 93–94; 100, 118,
 130, 138, 139
 Child custody, 171
 Child rearing, 6, 68, 105–108. *See*
 also Parenting
 Child support, 81, 138
 Christianity, 31, 45–47, 162
 Civil rights movement, 155, 165,
 167
 Civil War, 153
 Coeducation. *See* Education
 Cognition. *See* Intellectual abilities
 Cognitive-developmental model,
 68–69, 185
 Cohabitation, 89, 92–93
 Community organizations, 163,
 166–167
 Computers, 65, 117
 Consciousness-raising groups,
 155–156
 Contraception, 21, 91, 96, 97, 104,
 105 *See also* Abortion; Repro-
 duction
 Conversation, 39–40
 Corporate policies, 116–118, 132,
 134–135. *See also* Capitalism
 Criminal behavior 78, 108–112
 Criminal justice system, 149, 170–
 174
 Cultural change, 25–26, 49–55,
 81–82, 98, 161, 177, 178. *See*
 also Ideology and ideological
 change
 Cultural variation, 26–29, 32–33,
 57, 83, 133
 Culture, 6, 25–55, 91, 95, 179–
 180, 185

D

Date rape, 11
 Difference feminism, 18, 32, 185
 Discrimination. *See* Employment;
 Racism; Sexism
 Divorce, 93, 96
 “Doing gender,” 13, 62–64, 74,
 80, 105, 106, 177, 185
 Domestic violence, 11, 19, 90,
 108–112, 140–141, 148. *See*
 also Child abuse; Marital rape;
 Wife abuse
 Double standard, 53, 170–172
 Downsizing, 117, 185

E

Earnings, inequalities in, 88, 93,
 100, 108, 117, 119, 120, 123–
 125, 146, 158–159
 Eating problems 12, 14, 15, 44,
 161
 Economic change, 115–119, 122,
 133, 140, 145, 146, 161–162,
 177–178. *See also* Capitalism;
 Earnings; Opportunity struc-
 tures; Social class; Social strati-
 fication
 Economic inequality, 118–120. *See*
 also Earnings; Occupational
 segregation; Providing; Unem-
 ployment; Welfare
 Economic interests, 40, 42, 167–
 168. *See also* Capitalism, Cor-
 porate policies; Labor unions
 Economy, 88–89, 90–91, 115–147
 Education, 35, 70–74, 78, 83, 115,
 119, 124, 132. *See also* Higher
 education; Sex segregation;
 Teachers
 Egalitarianism, 59, 132
 Elder abuse, 109

Elder care, 90
 Electoral systems, 150
 Emotions, 18, 28, 32. *See also* Intimacy, emotional; Personality; Sex differences
 Employment discrimination, 21, 126, 134–135, 142
 Employment, wives, 8, 98–100, 102–103, 121–123, 135
 Equality feminism, 18
 Equal Pay Act, 155
 Equal Rights Amendment, 41, 156–158, 176
 Essentialism, 26, 27, 29, 30, 105, 169
 Ethnicity, 35–36, 57. *See also* Racial-ethnic; Social stratification
 European American. *See* Racial ethnic; White
 Exclusionary policies, 61
 Extended family, 87, 89–90

F

Family, 7, 81, 87–113, 115, 137, 147, 162–163, 167, 181, 188
 Family functions. *See* Child rearing; Emotional and sexual intimacy; Housework; Providing; Reproduction
 Family Medical Leave Act, 147. *See also* Parental leave.
 Family roles. *See* Fathers; Marital roles; Mothers; Parents
 Family wage, 98, 122
 Fathers, 7–9, 59, 78, 81, 83, 93, 95, 106, 135–136. *See also* Child rearing; Parents
 Female-headed household. *See* Single-parent families
 Femininities, 13, 26, 29, 32–33, 37, 41, 63, 74, 90, 91, 132, 180

Feminism, 9–20, 41, 42, 71–72, 188. *See also* Career feminism; Difference feminism; Liberal feminism; Postmodern feminism; Radical feminism; Socialist feminism
 Feminist methodology, 11, 19–20
 Feminist movement, 9–11, 32, 33, 46, 49, 50–52, 81–82, 135, 153–163, 166–167, 181. *See also* Activism; Men's Activism; Womanism
 Feminist scholarship, 11–20, 166
 Feminist theoretical perspectives, 11–18, 50. *See also*; Difference feminism; Liberal feminism; Postmodern feminism; Radical feminism; Socialist feminism
 Fetus, 104, 171–172
 First wave, 9, 153–155. *See also* Feminist movement
 Frame, 159, 186

G

Gay and lesbian activism, 52, 89, 158, 165–166
 Gay bashing. *See* Homophobia
 Gay men, 33, 74–75, 96, 162. *See also* Same-sex couples
 Gender, 2, 188
 Gender appropriate, 26, 33, 48–49, 60, 66, 69, 83, 101, 177, 182, 186
 Gender differences. *See*; Femininities; Masculinities; Sex differences
 Gender identity, 62, 63, 69, 74, 76–78, 186
 Gender-specific norms. *See* Gender appropriate
 Gender system, 2, 177–182, 186
 Ginsburg, Ruth Bader, 148
 Glass ceiling, 124, 159

Government. *See* Political system;
Public policy
Government, women in, 9, 149–
151, 158, 165, 167. *See also*
Judiciary; Legislature; U.S.
Congress

H

Harassment. *See* Sexual harassment
Health care, 50
Health insurance, 51, 104–105,
118, 138, 139
Hegemony, gender, 27–29, 33, 51,
58, 77–78, 144
Hegemony, U.S., 162
Heterosexuality, 32, 62, 74–76
Higher education, 20, 73, 78–80.
See also Education
Hill, Anita, 8, 152
Hispanic. *See* Chicana/o; Latina/o;
Racial-ethnic
Homelessness, 94, 119, 139–142
Home work, 130–131
Homicide, 110, 112
Homophobia, 32–33, 50, 52–53,
75, 89, 96, 158, 165
Homosexuality, 32–33. *See also*
Gay men; Lesbians; Same-sex
couples
Homosexual rape, 169
Household. *See* Family
Housework, 4, 21, 92, 100–103
Housing. *See* Homelessness

I

Ideology and ideological change,
25–55, 119–120, 124, 129–
130, 135, 148, 150, 160, 168,
180–186. *See also* Attitudes,
beliefs, and attitude change;

Patriarchal ideology; Separate
spheres
Immigrants, 25, 30, 36, 67, 99–
100, 117, 119, 121
Index of dissimilarity, 126–128,
186
Individual change, 57–59, 179
Individual development, 11, 67–
60, 73. *See also* Life course;
Socialization
Industrialization, 29, 115
Intellectual abilities, 28, 66, 67–70
Interaction. *See* social interaction
Internalization, 57, 61
Intersectionality, 13, 30–31, 55,
67, 76–78, 117, 131, 149, 167,
170, 172–173, 180–181, 186.
See also Multiracial feminism
Intersexuality 62
Intimacy, emotional, 87–88, 96–
97, 103
Islam, 45–46, 101

J

Job segregation, 124, 126–137,
186. *See also* Occupational seg-
regation
Judaism, 31, 45
Judiciary, 149, 171, 172
Jurisdictional inequalities, 170–171,
173, 175
Justice system. *See* Criminal justice
system; Legal system.
Juvenile justice system, 53, 170

K

Kennedy, President John F., 155
Kinship. *See* Family
Knowledge, 11, 12, 47–49, 50. *See*
also Education; Science; Social
construction

L

- Labor force participation, 8, 9, 52, 89, 116, 120–122, 135
- Labor market structure, 113, 116–119. *See also* Economy; Opportunity structures
- Labor unions, 19, 116, 122, 129, 130, 131, 144, 175
- Language, 25, 35, 37–40, 43, 50; 63, 83, 109
- Latina/o, 36, 63, 94, 121–123, 125, 128, 160. *See also* Chicana/o; Racial-ethnic
- Leadership, 19, 80, 150, 165–167
- Legal system, 88, 111, 134, 136, 148, 168–174. *See also* Sexism
- Lesbians, 40, 74–75, 96, 158, 165. *See also* Gay and lesbian activism; Same-sex couples
- Liberal feminism, 12, 15, 49, 143–144, 156, 187
- Life course, 78–82, 93. *See also* Individual change

M

- Machismo, 60–61
- Macro-social, 5, 6, 13, 83, 88, 89, 92, 181, 187
- Madonna, 10
- Male as normal, 19, 28, 34, 37–38, 41, 48
- Male superiority, 28, 34
- Manhood. *See* Masculinities
- Marital rape, 148, 171. *See also* Wife abuse
- Marital roles, 33–34, 40, 80, 101
- Marriage, 87, 91–94, 97. *See also* Same-sex couples
- Masculinities, 13–14, 26, 29, 31–33, 37, 40, 60–61, 63, 72, 74, 77–78, 84, 90, 91, 97, 115–

116, 130, 132, 141–142, 144–145, 161–163, 180

Maternity leave. *See* Parental leave.

Maximalist feminism, 18, 31, 187.

See also Essentialist feminism

Mechanization. *See* Industrialization; Physical strength.

Media, 8–9, 25, 40–45, 53–54, 93, 136, 145; 164, 166, 178

Medicine, 50–51, 52

Men, research on, 17–19

Men's activism, 161–163

Men's studies, 18

"Men's work." *See* Occupational segregation

Metaphors, 49

Micro-social, 4, 6, 82–84, 88–89

Middle class. *See* Social class

Middle level, 6, 13, 83–84, 88–89, 181

Military, 61, 130

Million Man March, 106, 162–163

Million Mom March, 151–152

Minimalist feminism, 18, 187

Modeling, 64

Mommy track, 9, 187

Moral development, 48, 67–70

Mothering. *See* Child rearing

Mothers, 8, 33, 58, 78, 88, 89, 93, 98, 103, 104–107, 116, 138.

See also Parents

Movies. *See* Media

Multiracial feminism, 12, 13–14, 49, 76–78, 80, 112, 144–146, 161–162, 175, 178, 182, 187.

See also Intersectionality

N

National Organization for Women (N.O.W.), 155, 158

Native Americans, 31, 36

Nature. *See* Essentialism

Negotiation of reality. *See* Social interaction
 New political economy. *See* Economic change
 News. *See* Frame; Media
 Nineteenth Amendment. *See* Women's suffrage
 Nontraditional work, 132–137
 Norms, 8, 57, 60–61, 84, 177, 187. *See also* Gender appropriate
 Nurturance, 32, 33. *See also* Personality

O

Object relations, 68, 187
 Occupational choices, 131, 143. *See also* Labor market structure; Nontraditional work
 Occupational hazards, 129–130, 137, 168
 Occupational integration, 9, 34, 52, 135–137
 Occupational segregation, 4–5, 27, 88, 124, 126–137. *See also* Job segregation
 Opportunity structure, 4, 61, 74, 81, 93, 106, 120, 145, 158, 179, 187
 Organizational integration, 163

P

Parental leave, 7–8
 Parents, 62–72, 93, 103, 104. *See also* Child rearing; Fathers; Mothers
 Paternity leave. *See* Parental leave.
 Patriarchal ideology, 26–31, 33, 34, 38, 40, 45–47, 49, 116, 130, 142. *See also* Ideology and ideological change

Patriarchy, 14, 38, 49, 142, 163, 165, 168–169
 Perceptions, 44–45, 163–165, 170
 Personality, 4, 32, 48, 66, 67–70, 88, 89. *See also* Individual change
 Physical strength, 13–14, 22, 28, 29, 32, 66, 115
 Physicians. *See* Medicine
 Pluralistic ignorance, 164, 187
 Political parties, 150
 Political system, 147–176
 Postmodern feminism, 12, 16–17, 188
 Poverty, 137–142. *See also* Feminization of poverty
 Power, 15, 39–40, 50, 83, 115, 149, 169, 178, 181. *See also* Patriarchy; Social stratification
 Pregnancy, 34, 76, 96–97, 104, 171–172
 Prejudice. *See* Attitudes, beliefs, and attitude change
 Profit motive. *See* Capitalism
 Promise Keepers, 106, 162–163
 Promotion (employment), 124, 129, 133
 Protective legislation, 168
 Providing, 88, 98–100, 102, 116, 121–122, 144
 Public assistance. *See* Public policy; Welfare
 Public policy 117, 118–119, 130, 137–142, 147, 149, 174–175, 178

Q

Queer Nation, 166

R

- Race, 35–36, 57, 163, 164, 180–181. *See also* Racial-ethnic; Social stratification
- Racial-ethnic, 30, 35–37, 42, 63, 70–71, 74, 80, 99, 117, 119, 120–125, 136, 142–144, 145, 149, 150, 159–160, 163–165, 166, 175. *See also* African American; Asian American; Latina/o; Native American; White
- Racial profiling, 173–174, 175
- Racism, 135, 159, 164. *See also* Attitudes, beliefs, and attitude change
- Radical feminism, 12, 15, 32, 49, 112, 142–143, 156, 175, 188
- Rape, 148, 149, 169
- Reagan, President Ronald, 119
- Reform, 15
- Region, 57, 133, 140, 142
- Regulation. *See* Legal system; Public policy
- Religion, 27, 29, 35–36, 45–47, 141, 167
- Reproduction, 104–105, 174–175. *See also* Contraception; Pregnancy
- Responsibility. *See* Agency
- Reverse discrimination. *See* Affirmative action
- Revolution, 15
- Role, 59, 188
- Rosie the Riveter, 51, 52

S

- Same-sex couples, 87, 88, 89, 96, 100–101, 106–107, 175
- Schema theory, 69–70, 188
- Schools, 70–74. *See also* Education
- Science, 25, 27, 47–48, 50, 52, 53, 75. *See also* Education; Higher education; Knowledge
- Second wave, 10, 32, 33, 46, 81–82, 148, 155–160, 161. *See also* Feminist movement
- Seneca Falls, 9
- Selectorate, 150
- Separate spheres, 29–32, 45, 98–99, 103, 113, 143
- Sex differences, 34, 47–48, 63, 66, 84, 158. *See also* Biology
- Sexes, 2, 17, 26
- Sex identity 62–64, 74, 188
- Sexism 15–16, 17, 27, 38, 66, 82, 135, 141–142, 149, 158–159, 161, 164, 165, 169, 172
- Sex segregation, 70–73, 81. *See also* Occupational sex segregation; Separate spheres
- Sexual activity, 2–3, 96–98
- Sexual assault, 169. *See also* Homosexual rape; Marital rape; Rape
- Sexual development, 74–76
- Sexual exploitation, 5–6, 31, 161
- Sexual harassment, 8, 11, 133, 148
- Sexual identity, 74, 188
- Sexual impotence, 97, 98, 104
- Sexuality 28, 33, 44
- Shepard, Matthew, 166
- Shift work 103, 108, 135
- Significant other, 64–67, 188
- Single parent family, 42, 93, 94, 106
- Social change, 2–3, 7–9, 20–21, 32, 76, 81–84, 95, 115–117, 147–151. *See also* Attitudes, beliefs, and attitude change; Economic change; Feminist movement; Ideology and ideological change
- Social class, 30, 44, 57, 63, 93, 109, 111–112, 130, 133–134,

136, 142–144, 149, 156, 159,
160, 164, 166, 175, 180–181

Social construction, 3, 17, 26, 47–
49, 109–111, 179, 188

Social control, 6–7, 61–62 148,
168–172, 188

Social institution, 7–8, 87–88,
170, 180, 188

Social interaction, 58, 71–72, 75–
77, 82–84, 164

Socialist feminism, 12, 14, 49,
143–144, 146, 156, 161–162,
178, 188

Socialization, 6, 16, 39, 43, 57–85,
105–106, 188. *See also* Life
course

Social learning model, 69, 188

Social movements, 151–153, 165,
181–182. *See also* Civil rights
movement; Feminist move-
ment; Gay and lesbian activ-
ism; Men's activism

Social stratification, 5, 31, 115–
146, 149, 181, 189. *See also*
Economic inequality;
Intersectionality; Racial ethnic;
Social class

Social structure, 3, 7, 26, 49–54,
82–84, 95, 150, 179–180,
189

Sociology, 3–6, 182

Sports. *See* Athletics

Spouse abuse. *See* Domestic vio-
lence; Wife abuse

Stagflation, 116

Stalking, 112

Statistical discrimination,

Status, 59–61, 84, 189

Status offense, 53, 170

Stereotypes. *See* Racial profiling

"Sticky floor," 159

Subcultures 35–36

T

Teachers, 20, 70–72

Technology, 21–22, 50, 76, 103–
105, 115–116, 174–175

Telecommuting, 137, 189

Television. *See* Media

Theory. *See* Feminist theories

Third Wave, 10, 160–161. *See also*
Feminist movement

Thomas, Clarence, 8, 152

Title IX, 73

Toys, 65, 73–74

Training, 132–133

Transgender, 166

Transportation, 103–104

Trophy wife, 14

U

Unemployment, 81, 118, 119, 120,
123, 139

U. S. Congress, 150, 151, 156

U. S. Senate, 150, 172

U. S. Supreme Court, 148, 168,
171

V

Viagra. *See* Medical insurance; Sex-
ual impotence

Violence, 28, 33, 43, 90, 108–112,
161, 169. *See also* Domestic
violence; Rape; Wife abuse

Violence Against Women Act
(V.A.W.A.), 171

W

*Webster vs. Reproductive Health Ser-
vices*, 171

Welfare, 111–112, 118–119, 137–
139

- Welfare reform, 8, 138–139
- White, 13, 31, 36, 63–64, 66–67, 70, 89, 94, 95, 121–123, 124, 127, 128, 136, 141, 149, 156, 159–160, 163, 167. *See also* Racial–ethnic
- Wife abuse, 11, 88–89, 108. *See also* Domestic violence; Marital rape
- Womanhood. *See* Femininities
- Womanism, 160
- Women's Liberation, 155. *See also* Second wave.
- Women's movement. *See* Feminist movement; Second wave
- Women's rights, 9–11, 155, 168
- Women's studies. *See* Feminist scholarship
- Women's suffrage, 30, 153–159, 168. *See also* Antifeminism
- "Women's work." *See* Occupational segregation
- Workfare, 118–119, 138
- Working class. *See* Social class
- Working poor, 119, 138
- Workplace climate, 136, 137, 179
- Worldview. *See* Ideology and ideological change
- World War I, 153
- World War II, 51, 52, 121



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